

*Alison  
and her Jo*

*William Finlayson*

*Ungaran*  
*Central Java*  
2012

*John Anderson my jo, John,  
When we were first acquent;  
Your locks were like the raven,  
Your bony brow was brent;  
But now your brow is beld, John,  
Your locks are like the snaw;  
But blessings on your frosty pow  
John Anderson my Jo.*

*John Anderson my jo, John,  
We clamb the hill the gither;  
And mony a canty day, John,  
We've had wi' ane anither:  
Now we maun totter down, John,  
And hand in hand we'll go;  
And sleep the gither at the foot,  
John Anderson my Jo.*

# Preface

THIS IS FICTION, but set in the real history of the twentieth century, as I remember and dimly understand it. The *dramatis personae* begin as imaginary inhabitants of an imaginary town. Inevitably it is based on my own experiences, but it is by no means a record of them. It is realistic only in the sense that it *could* all have happened. If any part of it seems improbable I can always defend myself, I think, by saying that I have known of much less probable things in real life.

My principal reason for writing it, in my eighty-fifth year, has been to fend off senile dementia, and to that end I have quite deliberately given it a slightly unusual structure, and forced myself to sort out the complexities of three interacting families, plus a few extras. To some readers this may be an attraction, and to others, not. There is always the possibility that it is a symptom of, and not a prophylactic for, dementia.

My title reflects little more than a whim, but it did start me off. For much of my life I have read and reread Burns, and when I was vaguely thinking of trying my hand at fiction it occurred to me that it might be amusing to tell the story of a couple who met as children and spent the rest of their lives together. The “my” of the song had no name attached to it, so I have given the singer a possible one. It may be worth explaining that “Jo”, now virtually extinct in the Scottish dialects, is the same as its still extant Irish equivalent, “Joy”. “My Jo” is translatable as “My Dear”, but obviously loses in the translation. Its inconsistent capitalization in the version I have printed, and the spelling of “bonny” as “bony”, are due to Burns, not me. WF

To go to a page on the computer, add 6 to the number below.

## Contents

Summer at ten .....	1
Alison's story .....	13
The new alliance.....	16
An old song .....	48
The qualifying year .....	57
Highland Mary .....	65
Contretemps in Kirkton .....	70
Visitors .....	76
At the Academy .....	88
Maternal wisdom .....	93
Back to France .....	101
John's mother .....	108
Rumours of war .....	113
Lives reorganized.....	117
Getting together .....	122
For the duration .....	132
The real war begins .....	139
Grandmother Campbell .....	143
Another new alliance .....	147
Business, not as usual .....	156
More departures .....	160
Prospects .....	165
The war grinds on .....	171
Senior school .....	180
Ann and Maggie .....	185

The middle of the war .....	190
Summer in Surrey .....	194
The Whites .....	205
Mixed news and views .....	210
An idea .....	216
Jim's war .....	221
John and the British army .....	231
Readjustments .....	236
Decision .....	241
The news from France .....	250
My new role .....	257
Jim and Marjory .....	261
A business opportunity .....	267
Edinburgh .....	273
Renewing contact .....	279
Another wedding .....	291
One more Anderson .....	298
Arts and crafts .....	303
A home and family of my own .....	309
The Edinburgh patriarchy .....	317
A summer in Argyll .....	323
A holiday for two .....	334
Plans .....	340
Life moves on .....	349
Building .....	355
An old interest renewed .....	360
Mile posts .....	369
It never stops .....	377
The last word .....	390

# Summer at ten

JOHN STOPPED some way along the path, down by the river, and carefully selected a stem of grass. He had been experimenting and had found out the best kind. He had no name for it. There were several books about wild flowers on the family shelves, but none of them had anything about grasses. His father might know; he must take a specimen home and ask. He had chosen a stem whose seeds were almost ripe. It was the biggest of the local grasses, and its head was thick and heavy. He grasped it and pulled. The stem came out cleanly, revealing a thick, juicy, lower end. He bit it and left it between his teeth. Then he decided to sit down on the grassy bank and think.

One of his father's many sayings was: "Sometimes I sits and thinks. And sometimes I just sits". This time at least he, John Anderson, would think. Deep thoughts they would be. He would be ten on Monday, and he had begun to wonder what life was all about. Everything. But mostly about what the future would bring. In particular, what would *he* do in the world?

It was his teacher who had started all this. When school was closing for the weekend, the day before, she had called him aside as the other children filed out. "You know, John",

she had said, “you’ll be going into our last class here next year, and there’s no doubt you’ll get good marks. That means, you’re heading for university.” He didn’t answer, but smiled politely. She continued: “It’s not too soon to be thinking about what kind of things interest you most. Even this summer you could be keeping it in mind. After the holidays we can have a longer chat. I’m moving up with you and you’ll be in my class again. And you should talk about it to your mother and father sometime”. In fact, it now seemed a little odd that he never had.

What else did he have to go on? His brother Jim was two years ahead of him. Sometimes Jim talked about what he wanted to do, but it was all a bit vague. As far as John knew, the teachers had had little to say, and the university had never been mentioned. Jim was now in Kirkton’s secondary school (the “Academy”), which could lead to higher education, but many of its pupils went straight into work when they finished there.

From scraps of conversation, John had somehow picked up one idea that seemed to make sense. In the early stages you didn’t decide on one very particular thing, and certainly you didn’t say anything like “I want to be an engine driver”, which the grown-ups obviously thought was some kind of joke. The older people in the family, and their friends, were in a wide range of jobs, and talked about them in a very general way. One was simply a civil servant, whatever that was. Another was a lawyer. A few were business men. Or you could be an engineer, or more exactly a civil or a mechanical one. Doctors or even teachers appeared to do a variety of different things. As it happened, there was nobody



from the police or the armed forces among their acquaintance.

So what did interest him? But first, there was the question of geography. All he really knew about was the life of their small town and the countryside round about. Big-city life was represented by Edinburgh. He had seen little of it, and what he had seen, he didn't much like. He was aware that several people they knew had gone to work even further away than Edinburgh, in England or overseas, or in one case had even emigrated permanently to Canada, but he could scarcely begin to imagine what these possibilities offered.

Even before this time, he had absorbed one main idea. He wanted to *do* something, and not just sit at a desk, "pushing paper". He had heard office jobs described in this way, and it seemed clear enough that it was not a desirable life, even if, he supposed, somebody had to do it. But it was not a question of indoors versus outdoors, or even of physical activity. Teaching, for example, would not be ruled out. Doing something "real" was what mattered.

One thing, that he had not thought much about before, was that there was a huge, bewildering variety of jobs in the world. What about aeroplanes, for example? Or the merchant navy, as he had heard someone call it? Or there must be new kinds of job with the BBC. It struck him that it might be a good idea to ask himself what kinds of work he would *not* like, or would not be good at. And that would still leave plenty of choices.

That was about as far as he could get with his thinking. He threw away his bit of grass, and walked slowly home.

He quite forgot to collect a specimen to see if anyone knew what the grass was called.

Saturday tea-time was always a little earlier than on week days. Their mother usually made something special, and they always lingered over the meal, discussing the events of the week. This time she had decided on no cake, as there would be a birthday one on the Monday, but had instead made something more like a dinner than their usual high tea, starting with potted herrings and potato salad, accompanied by bread and butter, of which you had to eat at least one slice, and ending with a pudding they were all fond of, known in the family by its full official name: “Apples with Dunfillan paste”.

When the meal was nearly over, John waited for a gap in the conversation, to tell them what his teacher had said about aiming for university. Jim made a face, but their little sister Ann looked at John admiringly – he was very much her favourite brother. Their mother said that it sounded good to her, but university was a long while into the future. Their father surprised them all by saying simply: “At least I hope you don’t follow in my footsteps”. He had never previously complained about his job as a bank manager, and if they had ever thought about it, they would have supposed that he was happy in his work.

After the tea things had been washed and put away, they settled down to a game of Monopoly, the latest craze. Their father said it was a silly sort of game, but at least it suited their range of ages. He himself didn’t play, but he sat on Ann’s side of the table, reading the evening paper, without giving it much attention. It was understood that she was

allowed to ask occasionally for his advice. The boys had no doubts about who *his* favourite was. When the game was over they all had mugs of cocoa, and Ann went off to bed, where it was her mother who followed her a few minutes later and tucked her in. Mum had no favourites, or so she said. The two boys, who shared a room, followed at their prescribed times, and each had the same attention. Jim was beginning to protest that he was too old for this kind of treatment, and to ask for a room of his own. They could make one in the attic, he said, as their neighbours had done recently.

Next day the forenoon was taken up as usual by church and Sunday school. Some families they knew had adopted the English custom of having a very full lunch on Sundays, with roast meat of some kind as its central point, but in their house they had kept to high tea as their main meal, and just had a light and easily prepared one in the middle of the day. It was warm and sunny outside, so they set out their deck chairs on the lawn. After their picnic-style lunch, Ann brought out her “shop” to play with and the boys good-naturedly agreed to buy from her, while her mother went into the house and came back with more items for its stock, and a handful of small coins to supply the customers with cash.

When they had all had enough of the shop game, Ann and her mother went off to pick some flowers for the house. The boys were sitting one on each side of their father. Jim decided to put a question to him, that had been on his mind for some time. It had surfaced during the week, when some of the other boys had been talking about what their fathers

had done, and Jim had realized that he didn't know much about his one. "Dad", he asked, "what did you do in the war?" His father took rather a long time to reply: "The truth is", he said, "I really don't want to talk about it. Some day, when you are both a bit older, I suppose I'll have to. It was all pretty horrible".

Jim persisted, however: "At least tell us something. We know you were in the army, because we've seen your photograph. But which part of the army?". "Well, that much is easy. I was with the heavy artillery". "Does that mean you weren't in the trenches?". "Yes, we were always well back from the front line". Perhaps to forestall the next question, he added "but don't imagine that it was lot safer. We were always one of the main targets for the other side. They attacked us with their own heavy guns and, especially in the last half of the war, they bombed and strafed us from the air as well. I was lucky not to have been in the trenches, but it was just some more luck that let me get through it all in one piece. I've said more than I meant to for now, so that's enough. We can wait until Mum is finished with her flowers, and then we'll talk about the holidays. We've got something to tell you".

They had indeed. All the arrangements had been made for what would be the children's very first trip abroad. They were going to France for the last two weeks of the school holidays. "Why the *last* two weeks?" they wanted to know. They weren't too put out by the answer, which they even thought was quite a good idea. It was so that they could make some effort to prepare for what they were going to see.

John remembered it long afterwards as a weekend for serious talk. When tea was over and Ann was going off to bed, their father did something he had had never done before, and asked the boys to come into his little study, as he had something he wanted to talk to them about. He had a chest with a cushion on top, and he got them to pull it round in front of his desk, and sit facing him.

He began: "I'm going to give you a short lecture. I've been thinking about what John's teacher said to him, and trying to sort out my own ideas. It's still early days for him, although there is something in what she says, and anyway Jim ought to be thinking more seriously about it". He paused. The boys said nothing. He continued:

"I'm not an expert in these things, and you ought to ask anybody who will talk to you about them. I think Mum can help a lot, and it's good that Miss Scott is taking an interest in you, John. But I do have some ideas of my own, and you must make what you can of them. It's quite like what I do every day at the bank. I give the customers my best advice about their investments, but then I always tell them I take no responsibility. In fact I am required to tell them this, every time. If the shares I recommend go down instead of up they shouldn't blame me too much. It's their business to gather what advice they can, and make their own decisions". He paused, and then went on:

"You seemed surprised when I didn't recommend banking, and I'll try to explain why I don't. These days, unless there is a farm or a family business to carry on, it's not all that common for boys to take up the same work as their fathers, so at least I wasn't trying to put you off from some

normal way of doing things. Anyway, *my* father wasn't a banker.

What's wrong with banking? Nothing really. Most people would tell you I have one of the best jobs going. Banks are good employers, and they pay me well. I am a respectable citizen in the town – a fairly big fish in a very small pond, you might say. It's full of human interest, and I think it's a very useful job. When I came out of the army my main idea was to marry Mum, so when I got the chance to start in the bank, with just enough pay to set up a home, I was very glad to take it. I've had quite rapid promotion, and my pay has always been enough for us to live on in comfort.

But in the end, I find there isn't much satisfaction in my work. The trouble is that I think too much about the things I might have done instead. I'm lucky in having my family, and I have my other interests. Taking one thing with another, it would be wrong of me to complain. Maybe I'm a bit foolish, like most fathers, but I have great hopes that all three of you can do something better. I think it's quite likely that you two can. Ann will get her own lecture some day – not too soon – and maybe she'll get it from Mum instead of me. The way I see it, life is a lot more complicated for girls. Boys are growing up into a world that's still not all that different from what my one was, but things are changing a lot more for girls. I just hope you two will stand by her whatever she decides to do". This time he made a longer pause, trying to sort out the advice he had to give them, before going on again:

"To start with, I'm not talking about other boys, but only about you two. You're not the same, but both of you have

brains, above average I think. So you have to look for ways of using them. You probably don't know the parable of the talents. You should read it. The simple version is in St Matthew. It's a favourite among bankers. It has a difficult ending, where it says: 'For unto every one that hath shall be given ... but from him that hath not shall be taken away'. But the main part of the story is very simple. The point is that if you are given talents you must make good use of them. The talent in the Bible was a coin, or a weight of silver, but I'm sure the rule is still good if we give it its present meaning, and very likely that's what Jesus intended. That's how parables work.

I'm sure you have other talents as well as some intelligence, and you must at least be beginning now to find out what they are. To my mind the great question is, can you *create* anything? It's one of the main drawbacks in my job, that we aren't asked to. Creative bankers usually end up in jail! What most people tell you is that you must find an interesting hobby. You know mine. Some people think photography is just a poor substitute for painting, but I think it's a bit more than that. I'm not good enough at it to try to earn a living from it. So I'm lucky to have things both ways – a job that brings in the money, and something to keep me happy after work.

But never forget that some people work full time in the arts and crafts, and they are the ones I really envy. Miss Scott is a great teacher, but I would take a bet that she never suggests, for example, that John here could be a writer of any kind. Everything from journalism to poetry is for reading, not writing, as far as teachers are concerned. Even

art and music teachers are the same”. Jim broke in at this point, however, to say: “That’s not quite true, Dad. Our art teacher told Tom Duncan that he has a real talent, and he could probably get into the Edinburgh Art College, and make a career of it. That’s where she studied, I think. And even for writing, we are starting a sort of school magazine”. “That’s good, then, said his father, maybe things are looking up a bit”. He went on again about what he had been saying:

“I have one idea that a lot of people don’t seem to agree with. I don’t think there is any sharp line between arts and crafts. Any good craftsman has to be something of an artist, and any good artist has to have learned the craft part of what he does. They meet in the middle. You can’t even say that mass production is always craft and not art. That print on the wall behind you is one of three hundred, but they are all the work of a real artist. And you can’t say, for example, that a fine building isn’t a work of art, or that an architect isn’t an artist”.

He made another short pause, and then for the second time he used a quotation from the Bible: “Your granny always used to say: ‘Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might’. It comes from Ecclesiastes, I think. To me it means that if you take up cabinet making, for instance, you will get real satisfaction out of making the best sideboards that you are able to make. Even when you are only trying to decide what kind of work you want to do, you can ask yourself, would I really want to put all I’ve got into that sort of thing? Or is it just going to be what brings me a salary every month? I have to admit that even in banking you can get some satisfaction out of doing it well – but I’m



sure it must be better if you have something more to show for your efforts than a small rise in business at the branch you're in charge of.

That's about enough for now. The real decisions will depend on your results at school, and what you discover as you look around you. If my experience of life is anything to go by, there is always a great deal of luck in it, and you certainly don't have complete control. I have great hopes anyway."

### *Pillow talk*

*What a day! How's your part going?*

*I've got a new trouble. One I've never had before in my life. Jealousy.*

*It's not my secretary, I hope. Nothing doing there. She's got her eye fixed on young Brown. Anyway, I really am monogamous. You have to believe it.*

*It's nothing to do with you. It's John. Miss Catherine Scott is stealing him from me.*

*She certainly seems to have taken a great liking to him. But you have nothing to worry about. There will always be other women in his life. Now it's his teacher. Some day it will be a girl friend. Then a wife. Then maybe a daughter. Even as it is you*

*have to share him with Ann. But nature gave you the best part, and nothing can take it away. I think you should try to see her point of view. She's an attractive young woman who has chosen a career, at least for now, instead of a husband and family. It's her job to look after other folks' bairns, and one of them has caught her fancy more than the rest. I'm sure she'll do no harm. In fact she could be a great help to him. So you be nice to her. She will lose him in a year or so, but he's yours for keeps.*

*Yes, maybe you're right. I think I'll write her a friendly little note, thanking her, and send it with a slice of birthday cake on Tuesday morning.*

*I hope you really mean friendly.*

*Go to sleep. I'm tired.*

# Alison's story

**M**Y FATHER was proud of being a Stewart, and was something of a sentimental Jacobite. He had a lot in common with John's father, especially in that he also had been through the Great War, and had survived. Likewise, he was reluctant to talk about it, all the more so, I think, because he had no sons, but only me, a girl. Unlike Mr Anderson, he had not come through unscathed, and had been in hospital when the war ended, recovering from a wound to his thigh, that had left him with a permanent slight limp. It was actually John who heard some parts of his story, a long time after we all first came together, and passed it on to me.

He had been another of the lucky ones who had never had to go over the top to face mass murder by machine gun, but had been a dispatch rider. He had been struck by shrapnel from a stray shell as he rode his motor bike back from the lines. The only part that he ever thought fit for my ears was about his time in hospital, where he had met my mother. According to him, she was by far the prettiest, most intelligent, best educated, kindest, and most helpful of the nursing sisters. And he said all this, and more, to me, when she wasn't even there to overhear.

He too had been one of the fortunate ones who had found work to come back to, and been able to get married soon afterwards. This was because my grandfather owned a drapery business that had been in the family for generations, in a market town that served a large but thinly populated part of Galloway. He wanted to expand it into a wholesale one, specializing in textiles. He put my father through a sort of accelerated apprenticeship in business, so that he could help to take charge of this new venture. At first they did well with the post-war boom, but then there had been a difficult period when the great depression came.

By 1936 things were looking good again, and my grandfather took the decision that was to have such great consequences for me. He had worked it out that his wholesale customers were mostly distributed among the four main Scottish cities, and that having his warehouse in the far southwest did not make sense. When he looked into it he decided that a move to a strategically placed country location in the Lowlands was what was needed. After making a careful study, he alighted on Kirkton. He himself would go into semi-retirement and continue to live with my grandmother in their old home. My uncle would take over the shop, and my father would move, set up a new home with my mother and me, and manage the new business.

It had not been because they did not want more children, that I was an only child. My mother never went into any details, but I know that she had had several miscarriages,

and had had to be very careful before I was born. And then she had taken the doctors' advice, and agreed to a hysterectomy.

We moved to Kirkton at the beginning of the summer school holidays. On our first Sunday we attended the same church that the Andersons went to. After church my mother took me along to the Sunday school. As we were almost the same age, I was put in the same group as John. I can honestly say that he made an immediate impression. He was of course a good looking boy, tall for his age, with black hair and lively brown eyes, but what really made him stand out was that he gave me a big smile, and said "Hello. I'm John. What's your name?" Boys and girls were mixed up in the Sunday school classes – each group covered a range of ages, and many were brothers and sisters – so there was nothing very unusual in my sitting beside this friendly boy. I noticed that he took an active part in the class, and was often the first to answer the teacher's questions. Maybe he was showing off, just a little, for my benefit.

I saw him again, and we exchanged greetings, but not much else, on the next two Sundays. Then for the last three Sundays of the ordinary school's holidays he wasn't there. One of the other boys told me he had gone off to France with his parents. Rather unreasonably, I suppose, I felt a little hurt that he had not told me about this plan himself. I had begun to think of him as my special friend. Evidently he had no such idea – or so I thought, but I was in for a big surprise.

# The new alliance

THE LAST WEEK at school was much as it always is, with schoolwork not being taken very seriously, and some gaps appearing on the benches as a few parents took their children away early. The Andersons would never have done that. John had his birthday tea, and delivered a generous slice of his cake to Miss Scott. She seemed really pleased to get it, with his mother's note, to which she sent a short reply, in a sealed envelope. By the end of the week everything was tidied up and put away, and they went home earlier than usual on the last Friday. Nothing had been said or done about the holiday plans, except that their father remarked that there would be a lot to discuss over the weekend.

On Saturday, the good weather broke, and by midday it was drizzling miserably, so after their usual light lunch the family cleared the big dining table, and sat down again around it as instructed. Their father emerged from his study with what appeared to be (and was) a formidable mass of educational material. He was looking very pleased with himself, and told them that this represented his evenings' work for many weeks past. They had often heard his typewriter, but that in itself was nothing unusual. He kept up a big correspondence, and nearly all of it was typed.

First he explained that they were going to Fontainebleau. It was where he and their mother had had a sort of delayed honeymoon in 1922, when the country was still suffering from the aftermath of the war, and they thought they would like to go back now and see how the people were getting along. From their previous trip they had learned a lot about the town and its neighbourhood, and they would be better able to find their way around on a second visit. Also, as he further remarked, the same reasons that had led them to choose it in 1922 also meant it was a good place for the children to go in 1936. The palace was full of interest and there was a most beautiful forest. They could easily make one or more day trips to Paris. And it was as good a place as any to sample French food, a thought that caused his face to light up.

He did say that he supposed that the children might have preferred the seaside, and maybe they would try that the next time they went abroad, but he really wanted this visit to be educational. When he was young, he had never set foot on the Continent until he went to war, which was not at all the same thing as a holiday visit, and he had always felt it to be a great disadvantage that he hadn't. He began with maps, methodically working through increasing scales, from a map of Europe to the Michelin one that included Fontainebleau. He explained how they would get there by train and Channel ferry, with an overnight stop in London, and told them he had made a booking with the hotel they had been to before in Fontainebleau, remarking that he just hoped it hadn't been changed in any way, as they had liked it so much.

All he said about the palace was that they would be surprised by how big it is, and that it was associated with two main periods of history, which he expected Jim at least to take an interest in: mainly around the time of its creation by François I, and then when Napoleon used it. As to the forest, it would mainly be for walks and picnics, if the weather held up. They should realize, however, that there was no forest in the least like it, in the British Isles. He would try to show them some of the ways in which it was properly looked after. He brought in another of his favourite quotations, and said that some day they would enjoy reading the book it came from: “They order ... this matter better in France”. The boys suspected, rightly, that they would hear that one again.

He didn't say much about Paris, except that they should think of this as only a first brief visit, and they would stick to just a few of the main sites that everybody knew, like the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame. They wouldn't even find much about these things in the stuff he had prepared – the main point was just to see them. Paris also had to be a good day for Mum, as he was sure she would want to do some shopping. Maybe just for a day, or half a day, they could separate, and he would think of something the boys would like to do, while Ann kept her mother company. The last item on the list was Barbizon, which he pointed out on the map. He had first been drawn by its connection with Robert Louis Stevenson, but in fact, he said, on the previous visit they had found practically nothing to remind him of his favourite author, and he saw it now mainly as a place to make an easy first step towards learning about modern painting.



They would have a clear fortnight in Fontainebleau, which would give them plenty of time, and what they did from day to day could depend on the weather. In the meantime they had four weeks to go through their notes. He had organized them in three box files, each containing some separate folders, and each boxful suited, as best he could manage it, to their different ages. The other big thing was the language. Only Jim had done any French at school, but this was an opportunity for all three of them to learn at least a few ordinary polite phrases, and to try to get the pronunciation right. Mum, he said, knew far more French than he did, and she would give them some lessons each day until they left. Their boxes contained some simple books that she had found for each of them. To end with, he told them what they could all have guessed anyway, that one of his own main activities would be trying out his new Leica. He would also be taking his old camera, and if they wanted to they could borrow it and he would supply some films.

Had they any questions? Jim was the first to speak up. One of his friends had been to France last year, and Jim remembered him talking about one of the things he hadn't liked. What were they going to do about drinks? That one was quickly passed on to their mother, who hadn't said anything so far. She said it was quite a problem. She remembered her own first visit, one very hot summer. It really wasn't a good idea to drink water from the tap, as they did at home, but they would get bottled water when they needed it. French children were given wine mixed with water, and they could try some – but they probably wouldn't like it. She hoped at least that they would get into the way

of having *café au lait* with their breakfast; they could put in as much *lait* as they wanted.

Ann, who liked food, also spoke up: “What do we eat on the train, all that long way?” She was assured that the trains would have dining cars.

John, as always, asked the slightly awkward question: would they get any time to themselves? But it had in fact also occurred to his father, and he had an answer ready, even if it wasn’t an entirely satisfactory one. He said that on the one condition, that the three of them kept together, they could at least go out into the small town and just see what they could find for themselves. Maybe, for example, they could find some small souvenirs to take home, or picture postcards that they could take to the post office; he would see to it that they had some French money to spend. When the family needed picnic food they could go out and buy it; Mum or he would come along the first time. That would involve not only money, but also weights and measures. He thought he could remember some kind of park, and a small lake where they could hire a rowing boat. All these things would mean that they had to speak some French.

Mum helped them to pack or rather, she did it for them, with some discussion of what they would need. Jim was given his very own rucksack, which was to double as something to carry picnic food in. John had the use of a small suitcase, and Ann a still smaller one, but Mum also put some of Ann’s clothes in her bigger case. Their father insisted on having a small suitcase of his own, as well as a special case for his camera and all its extra bits and pieces.

The first day's train travel all went according to plan, and the time passed quickly. There was quite a lot to see – Ann remembered particularly her brief view of Durham, and marked it down as a place to go back to.

Mr Anderson knew London, or at least the central parts of it, quite well, and had discovered a modestly priced but agreeable hotel for them near Victoria station. They took a London bus the short distance to Westminster, so that at least they could see Big Ben, the outside of the Abbey and the Houses of Parliament, and the Thames. Their taxi from King's Cross had taken them past Buckingham Palace. A proper visit to London would have to wait for another occasion.

The Channel was bathed in sunshine and the sea was flat calm, so they didn't discover who, if any of them, might have been susceptible to sea-sickness. Their mother contributed the remark, that in the days of sail they couldn't even have left Dover on such a day. Their father couldn't resist telling them: "The further off from England, the nearer is to France". He said that there were more ships crossing their path than there had been in 1922, and that this was a good indicator of how world trade was increasing.

Their Paris taxi between stations did not take them within sight of anything they could recognize. In Fontainebleau they took another taxi, as it was too far for them to carry all their baggage to the hotel. The owner and his wife said convincingly that they remembered Monsieur and Madame very well. They made complimentary remarks about the children, and the owner himself showed them all to their rooms, which were two big ones with a connecting door,

side by side, at the back, overlooking the little garden with its umbrella-shaded tables and chairs. Ann had not been too pleased by having to share a room with the boys in London, but accepted that it was reasonable in Fontainebleau, even when it was explained to her that baths were “by arrangement” in the locked bathroom along the corridor, and she would have to wash as well as she could, most days, in the bedroom.

Having established, rather to her pleased surprise, that the hotel was just as it had been, their mother said that when they had all got themselves sorted out they should go and see if their old eating place was also unchanged. It had been altered, but only very slightly, and as far as the food was concerned, hardly at all. The waiter who served them was new, but friendly, and seemed to like children. They slept well that night.

They had booked their fortnight’s stay from a Saturday to a Saturday, so the next day was Sunday. Their parents had decided to give church a miss for three Sundays, as they certainly wouldn’t have gone to a Roman Catholic one, and didn’t want to subject the children to Protestant sermons in French – that was what they said anyway. Perhaps they could look into the French New Testament, which they had brought with them. The weather was good, so they decided to walk some way into the forest and have their first French *pique-nique*. That had given their mother an opening, which she took, to explain that it was originally a French word, and to pass on what she had found when she looked it up at home in her *Petit Larousse*, knowing that it would be a key word over the holiday.

After breakfast, therefore, it was their first time for shopping, and Jim was told to pay attention, as he would be in charge the next time. However, it was Ann who, as a shopkeeper herself, took most interest in the money involved. From a note in her box of papers she had enterprisingly worked out a system of approximate equivalents for small sums, and she was now astonished by the price of the pastries. “You get what you pay for”, her father told her, “you’ll see”. But he did direct her to some of the slightly less extravagant fruit tarts. He had a mild dispute with their mother as to whether they needed two or three baguettes, and won his point by saying that what two hungry boys didn’t eat could go to feed the birds in the forest. In the event the birds got no bread. A second shop, that said it was a *charcuterie*, actually sold a wide range of food and drink, and they bought one bottle of wine, two of water, 200 grammes of butter (measured out for them just as it would have been in Scotland), two sorts of cheese, and slices of *saucisson* – another opportunity for linguistic comment, on the difference between that and *saucisse*.

Jim packed it all carefully in his rucksack, which already contained tumblers, knives, and a cloth, from home. As they went out of the town, just as they were about to cross the main road that runs along the edge of the forest, they spotted a little temporary kiosk where a man was selling peaches, and chose five big ripe ones to top up their supplies.

They did not go very far that first day. A sign directed them to a notable old oak tree, and when they got to it they found it was a good place to picnic. Before they ate anything, they had to listen to a short explanation of what they had

seen so far. At least they all knew an oak tree or a beech when they saw one, but none of them remembered ever having seen a hornbeam before.

What they hadn't realized was that all the part of the forest they had been walking through had quite young trees – by oak standards at least. They were the “regeneration” that had been completed here about forty years ago, and the old tree, which was said to be nearly two hundred years old, had been kept and given a name. It would be allowed to live until it died. The main point they had to take in was that none of the trees they were looking at had been planted, but had grown up from acorns and other seeds that had fallen where the trees now stood. Their father had managed to acquire a map that showed how the whole forest was divided up according to the age of the trees.

They would see more on other days. For the present, one of their projects was to make carbon rubbings of the leaves of as many different trees and shrubs as they could find, so before they were allowed to eat they had to collect specimens of the commonest kinds, to be put into the rucksack, and dealt with at the hotel.

In the afternoon the children made their first unaccompanied expedition, and came back just before the appointed time limit, in a state of some excitement. They found their parents out in the hotel garden, as expected. Ann was allowed to begin, and without any preliminaries told them: “We’ve made some French friends!” John explained that they had found a souvenir shop open and had gone in to buy postcards. While they were choosing them from the rack a French boy and girl had heard them

speaking English. The boy had said “Bonjour” and they had all replied, and then he had tried out his English on them. “Where do you come from?” and so on. On the Anderson side, it was mostly Jim who had tried out his French. The boy was carrying a ball, and invited them to go to a small park where they could play together, which was what they had been doing for the last hour or two.

Among them they seemed to have exchanged quite a lot of information, in a mixture of the two languages. They had had the usual difficulty of explaining that *Ecosse* was not part of *Angleterre*, but just united to it. They had got it clear easily enough, however, that their new friends were brother and sister. The girl, whose name was Pauline, was about the same age as Ann, and the boy, Robert, between Jim and John. It had taken them some time to realize that *Robert* was the same as the English name, without pronouncing the “t”. Jim knew all about the choice between *vous* and *tu*, and it was he who had asked if they could use *tu*, a proposal that was instantly accepted. He was rewarded by being told about the verb *tutoyer*, and Robert thoughtfully warned them that it was only to be among the five of them. If they ever met any of the adults of his family, they would have to say *vous*. The two of them came from Paris, and were staying for the whole month of July with their aunt and uncle in Fontainebleau. They had made a rendezvous at the park for the following afternoon, and said they knew where the hotel was, and if the rendezvous failed they would come there in the evening. All three Andersons said they liked Robert and Pauline very much, and John volunteered his opinion that they seemed to like the Andersons just as much in return.

### **Pillow talk**

*I hope we meet these French children soon.*

*You worry too much. It seems like great good luck to me.*

*I think we should try to meet the aunt and uncle.*

*I expect they have the same idea about us.*

*Will it alter the great educational plan?*

*I don't think so. Just add to it in a way we could hardly have hoped for. They can play a little more – and absorb French in the best possible way.*

*Yes, and beyond that we'll just have to wait and see.*

*Tomorrow we'll make them walk a great deal further. The present regeneration area is away over on the other side. There should be plenty to see there. The bit in between has some of the oldest stands, next on the list for regenerating, so they can see what a mature oak forest looks like. As well as that, there will still be a few of the very best trees left, where they are cutting at present.*

*Would you rather have been a forester than a banker?*

*Yes, on one impossible condition. It would have had to be in France! But it makes for a good extra interest on trips like this one.*



On the following day, Monday, the children were sent off as soon as they had finished breakfast, armed with a bilingual list and the necessary money, to buy the same sort of things they had had for their picnic the day before. Ann was told that she could choose a different kind of pastry, but not one of the most expensive kinds. Jim was a little worried about the bottle of wine, but he needn't have been. It was handed over just like any other item of grocery.

They walked, for what seemed a long way, through the oak forest, stopping only once for their father to take some photographs, and to explain how these older parts of the forest had been carefully thinned, so that all the remaining trees were tall and straight and only had branches high up. The value of such a forest was enormous, although he didn't know enough about it to name a figure. And underneath the oaks there was an almost complete cover of beech and hornbeam which, as they could see, meant that the ground was fairly clear of grass and other small plants, and if they liked to kick it (which they dutifully did) they would find that the soil was nice and soft. Everything was ready and waiting for some day in the future when there would be a lot of acorns – it didn't happen every year.

When they came to the regeneration area, their first surprise was to find that you could easily have supposed that the main produce wasn't timber at all, but firewood. Neat stacks, one metre wide (the length of the pieces) and one metre high, but of varying length, were everywhere. Their father explained that firewood really was important, but the main season for selling it was later in the year, whereas the valuable timber had all been taken away soon

after it was cut, in the winter. They got a much better idea now of just how the new trees came up. There were some big patches with seedlings up to one or two metres in height, where the old trees had all gone, some where the patches were incomplete, or the seedlings still very small, or even places where there were no young trees at all, where the felling had still to be begun. If no good “mast years” came along, the foresters sometimes did plant trees that had started life in a nursery, but planting was a last resort – while in Scotland it was a forester’s main occupation.

Jim wanted to know then, how *do* the French foresters spend their time? He was told that managing all this felling work is no light task. But they also have to look after the young trees. Their first job is “cleaning”. “If you have a look at one of these patches you’ll easily see what is needed. There are some young oaks that probably got there too soon, and now they are coarse and branchy and interfering with better ones. They have to be cut out. And there are weed trees, mostly willows, that are doing the same, and have to be removed”. They went right into one patch so that they could see it properly. They were surprised by how densely packed the young trees were. That’s the whole point of natural regeneration, they were told. It’s what you need if you want to end up with a forest of really good oak trees, and it would cost far too much to plant enough of them.

The children were becoming anxious not to miss their rendezvous, so they didn’t linger over their picnic as long as their parents would have liked, but set off back to the town as soon as they reasonably could. In fact their father had brought them in the morning by a rather winding path,

that he had followed on his map, and they arrived in plenty of time, by following one of the more direct forest roads that the firewood lorries used. Their friends were already in the park waiting for them. Pauline ran forward and kissed Ann on both cheeks. Ann recovered her wits quickly enough to respond in kind. Fortunately, Robert decided that handshakes were more appropriate for the males of the party. He had also prepared an announcement in English, to say that his aunt and uncle invited the Andersons to come for an *apéritif* (for which he had not been able to find an equivalent word) that evening, and they would go with the Anderson children to the hotel to ask if that was all right. Instead of playing with Robert's ball, they all sat down on one of the long park benches, Ann and Pauline at one end, and Robert between John and Jim at the other. All five had thought of a great many questions, and had even been mulling over how to put them in the other language. If the two girls were the least advanced in language learning, they seemed to make up for it in ingenuity. Their parents would have been astonished.

At the hotel they found Mr and Mrs Anderson drinking tea in the garden. Jim seemed to know what to do, and introduced Pauline and Robert with some formality. He also thought it best to pass on their message himself. His mother threw his father the briefest of glances before saying to Robert, in French, that of course they would be very pleased to come. She asked him if six o'clock would be suitable, and he told her he was sure it would be, and that he would come to the hotel to show them the way. It was only about five minutes walk, he said.

He took them to a block of flats in a quiet side street, and up to the first (or as he would have had it, the second) floor, and they found themselves in a comfortable, if rather old-fashioned apartment. Its rooms were surprisingly large, with high ceilings. After Robert had made the proper introductions, the grown-ups spent some time in getting names sorted out. No adult on either side suggested the use of Christian ones. The uncle, a Lesage (about which he made a little joke), was the brother of the children's mother, whose married name, and therefore the children's, was Desmoulins.

The children went off into the kitchen, which it appeared was where the family normally had their meals, and Robert and Pauline got them things to eat at the table. The adults sat down in the *salon* to talk, in French, with the drinks of their choice and a variety of canapés. At some points, however, it was M. Lesage who was able to translate slightly unusual words into English. Some time was taken up with inquiries and discussions about why the Andersons had chosen Fontainebleau for a family holiday. Mme Lesage explained that unfortunately they had no children of their own, but were very fond of their nephew and niece, and saw them as often as possible. This year they counted themselves extra lucky in that they had come for a whole month, while their parents had gone off on an extended tour of Scandinavia, which they said would just have bored the children. Their uncle and aunt were sure that the children's parents would be as pleased as they were that the two of them seemed to have formed an instant attachment to the Anderson ones.

There were then the usual inquiries about where the Andersons lived, and the inevitable explanations about it being in *Ecosse* and not *Angleterre*. One connection at least was known to both of the Lesages: Marie Stuart. They knew that she had been brought up in France and had been Queen of France before she became Queen of Scots, and they also knew the rest of her tragic story, at least in its broad outlines.

Politeness delayed anything like direct questions, but somehow they eventually got round to finding out about the husbands' professions – it being assumed that the wives were simply married women, even if they had done some kind of “real” work when they were younger. It was a question that had evidently not come up among the children, because it produced the great surprise of the evening: the men were *both* bank managers. In later years they all thought that it was this coincidence that had sealed what was to become a lasting friendship.

Their little party ended with Mr Anderson explaining that on the following Sunday they were planning not to have a picnic, but to have lunch at their usual restaurant, to let the children see the way in which so many French people enjoyed their Sundays. Would the Lesages and the children be their guests? Madame said at first, from politeness, that this would be too much of an imposition, but when pressed she soon said that yes, they would be delighted. They knew the place well and often ate there themselves. Afterwards, at bedtime, Ann asked why people would want to eat in a restaurant so near their home. Her mother said maybe she would get the idea on Sunday.

**Pillow talk**

*Can we really afford this lunch party?*

*Yes, we're well within my estimates so far.*

*What about tomorrow's shopping?*

*We did discuss how much we can afford to spend. It's all in the budget. The only thing I really would like is some useful bit of Limoges for the table. Be sure to give yourself priority when it comes to clothes. That's what we've come to France for.*

*Maybe some material that I can make up myself.*

*Ann will probably settle for some little bit of costume jewellery I doubt if the boys would find anything. They would say there are better shops in Edinburgh. When we go to Barbizon, I'm hoping to interest them in prints to decorate their bedroom walls. We can see if we can find one for each of them.*

*What do you make of the Lesages?*

*It's an extraordinary coincidence that he's a banker.*

*What a pity they have no children of their own.*

*I don't know so much. Having children for just one month of the year isn't such a bad idea.*

*You say these daft things, but I don't believe you mean a word of it.*

Tuesday had been set aside for a first visit to Paris, by train, so the children arranged to meet up once more on the Wednesday afternoon. Robert offered to escort them to their hotel, but they said they were sure they could easily find their way. Instead of going straight there, however, they called in at the restaurant to reserve a table and to discuss the menu that would be on offer. The owner said that at most times of year he would not have been able to accommodate them, but now many of his regulars were away on holiday, and he could just manage to fit them in, at a table for nine. They asked if they could come back later and have a little *souper*, as they had already been eating, and he said yes, of course, and when they came he provided just that – a tureen of delicious *poireaux pommes de terre*, with an ample supply of bread.

On the train to Paris, Mr Anderson said he had been racking his brain to think of something he and the boys could do, while Ann and her mother went shopping. Would they all agree to this plan? – it had the disadvantage that Ann would miss the bit the boys got, but she would have another chance some day, and he was sure that for today at least she would prefer to see the shops. The children pricked up their ears to hear what it was that Ann would be missing. “My idea is that we all start with the Eiffel Tower. Just long enough to go up and look at the view. Then we can go to Notre Dame. I know of an economical place to have an early lunch, on the Ile de la Cité. Then Mum and Ann can make their own way to the right bank and the big shops. It’s within walking distance, if Mum wants to do it that way. They needn’t rush. We’ll have another visit next Tuesday”.

“The boys and I can take a *bateau-mouche* down the river. We’ll see how the time goes, and maybe walk back, or else return by boat. We can all meet at the station. There is a train at 4.30 which shouldn’t be too busy. Meet at the platform. I have the return tickets”. Ann would clearly have liked to go both ways at once, but when it came to really having to choose, she had no doubt that she would prefer to go shopping with her mother, so the scheme was agreed. It all went according to plan. When they got back to their hotel they decided that this just had to be a bath day, and that took up most of the time before they went for dinner at their now familiar restaurant, refreshed by their baths, and really hungry. All agreed that it had been a good day, and they were looking forward to their second trip to the big city. Mr Anderson was especially pleased with the cake plate that his wife had found, nicely decorated with a small floral pattern.

On Wednesday morning the children were sent again for picnic supplies, and told they should try to make some variation if they saw anything they fancied – some other sorts of cheese at least. This time they went into a quite different part of the forest. It was rocky, and in most of it there were pines instead of oak trees. They had read about this in their notes. The pines were the same sort that they knew at home, where people called them “Scots pines”, although in fact they grew all over northern Europe and even into Asia; the French called them *pins sylvestres*. This area was a nature reserve, and was no longer being cut over for timber. They sat down for a bit and discussed this idea. Jim said: “Dad, what about the oak forest? Isn’t that ‘natural’ too, sort of?” His father said: “We could talk about that all



day! ‘Natural’ is a difficult word. If it means ‘untouched by man’ there is really hardly any such forest in the whole of Europe. Nearly all of it has at least had some trees cut at some time, or been used for hunting, which means interfering a lot with the animal life, and that affects the trees too. The forest here, and the other big oak forests in France, are almost all ‘naturally regenerated’, but they are certainly not just left to nature. The foresters decide which trees to cut and when, and they create this pattern of ‘stands’ of different age classes. And it’s not only the oak trees – they also try to control the beech, and to reduce the number of unwanted ‘weed’ trees”.

After they had walked about and had a good look around, and Mr Anderson had taken even more photographs than he had on their other days in the forest, Ann pronounced that she didn’t like it as much as the main forest. “Those big oak trees are really beautiful” she said. Her father was amused by this, and said she must be a forester at heart. He tried to explain that artists, and even photographers, often found that old misshapen trees, or even dead or broken ones, made interesting pictures. Jim said the foresters might at least take the timber away, and not just leave it to rot on the ground, but he was reminded of what had been explained in their notes. The scientists wanted to see how the old logs provided breeding places for insects and small animals, and how the dead trees were used by the birds as sources of food, and sometimes even for nesting in.

In the afternoon it was suggested that the children should bring their friends along to the hotel, and they could all spend some time in the little garden. The Andersons’

baggage included a pack of cards, and maybe they could teach each other their different games, while the parents read. The hotel would supply drinks later in the afternoon. This in fact turned out to be a good idea. Ann won twice at her favourite game, known to the anglophones as “Pelmanism”, where the cards were scattered face down and each player picked up two at a time. If they were of the same value, like two Queens, or two fives, he or she kept them and had a second try and if not, the cards were returned and the next player tried to remember where one of them could be matched, or another pair found.

The Desmoulins children said they had never been to Barbizon, so it was suggested that, if their aunt and uncle agreed, they should come to the hotel after Thursday’s breakfast and join in the Andersons’ excursion. They would not be taking a picnic, but would have some simple lunch in a café. In the morning Robert and Pauline turned up in good time, all smiles and ready to go.

The Anderson parents remembered that in 1922 it had not been at all easy to get from Fontainebleau to Barbizon. It doesn’t look far on the map, but there were no direct buses, and they had had quite a complicated journey. This time Mr Anderson had made more inquiries, and had been told that it was now a little easier, and he had been given instructions that still, however, involved two buses each way. They were just local country ones that made many stops, so that it took a surprisingly long time to get to their destination, but it was all through a pretty countryside, and there was a lot to see and talk about.

They arrived in time to visit the little museum and art gallery before lunch. The curator, seeing the five children, showed them round, with Mrs Anderson translating as much as she could. He was apologetic about the paintings on display. There were one or two originals by lesser artists of the Barbizon School, but most were copies. Pride of place was given to Millet's *"les Glaneuses"*, which their guide said was a very good copy of the painting in the Louvre, and that only an expert could tell that it was not the original. Mr Anderson had in fact been able to show his three a reproduction of it in one of his books, before they left home, and also one of its companion piece, *"l'Angelus"*. He had done his best to tell them about how the Barbizon group related to the Realists and the Impressionists, and how they had revolutionized painting. He had calculated that this back door introduction to French art would work better than the overwhelming Louvre, and was already planning a visit to the relatively modest Scottish National Gallery as his next move.

He took the opportunity to ask anew of the curator, if there was anything to see in the village relating to the Stevenson connection. The reply was that he had been asked about this before, by American as well as British visitors, but that Siron's inn, where RLS had sometimes stayed, no longer existed as he had known it, and there was really nothing to see in Barbizon to commemorate him. Mr Anderson said it was all rather a pity, as Stevenson had been a great Francophile, and had loved the Fontainebleau forest.

They had something to eat and drink out on the pavement in front of the main café in the centre of the village,

and then spent some time looking into the shops and galleries that were selling both original modern paintings, and reproductions of famous works, mainly those of Théodore Rousseau, Millet, Corot, and others of the Barbizon School. Jim, who had now been promised his own attic room in the near future, thought that a lithographed version of "The Gleaners" would look good, and acquired it, carefully packed in a cardboard tube. Ann said that was a bit like one of her friends at home, who had bought a bicycle lamp in the hope that she would soon get a bicycle. John announced that he was going to save up and buy a real painting in Scotland. Their mother admitted that she was tempted by some of the items on sale, particularly some decorative modern prints, but that she had spent a lot of money in Paris, and they still had some more wants for their second visit there.

Then it was time to return to Fontainebleau. They considered walking back through the forest, but decided that it would be too far for the two little girls, and the weather was warm, so they went back by the same route as they had come, on the buses, and parted company at the hotel. Robert and Pauline agreed to come there after lunch next day, to see what everybody wanted to do.

In the morning, Mr Anderson said it was high time for them to take more interest in Fontainebleau's main claim to fame, the great palace. They could begin with the outside, starting with the *Cour des Adieux*, and try to picture the scene when Napoleon said farewell to his Old Guard. When they got there they found a spot to sit, where they could look across to where the Emperor had stood, and

the children tried to remember what was in those folders, now put away in Kirkton, not only about the occasion itself, but also the important slice of European history that it was part of. Their father was well pleased that each of them contributed something, and that collectively they covered the main outline remarkably well. Even the eight-year old Ann had taken in the stories of Joséphine and Marie-Louise, and expressed her strong disapproval of such goings-on. He thought he had succeeded, he said, in introducing them to Napoleonic studies, even if it was from nearly the end, looking back. After the abdication at Fontainebleau and the famous *adieux*, only Elba, Waterloo, and St Helena were still to come.

Jim asked him if he thought Napoleon was someone to be admired, and got a much longer answer than he had bargained for. On the one hand there had been terrible wars that had led to vast suffering, death and destruction, but on the other hand Napoleon had left a great tradition of good government in France, including his codification of the law. He had also given a boost to “protectionism”, which he wanted to talk to them about some other day. In particular, because of the blockade, he had been responsible for the introduction of beet sugar, which was still distorting free trade. Altogether, you couldn’t begin to understand modern Europe if you didn’t take Napoleon into account.

They wandered around outside the buildings, as far as the public was allowed to do so, and, as had been predicted, were struck by their extraordinary size and extent. Their mother got a word in about Versailles, which she thought was generally much better known to the world outside

France, and said that would also be a likely place for some future visit. They made an interesting contrast. She preferred Fontainebleau herself. She thought it belonged to a much better age, as far as architecture was concerned. They would come back next week and see something of the inside. Don't worry, she said, we wouldn't drag you through every room, even if that were possible. And, she said, it's all about much nicer people than Napoleon, even if our great religious troubles were then just about to begin.

Mr Anderson had no definite plan for Saturday. The palace would be crowded. Maybe they would just wander into the forest without any particular target.

#### **Pillow talk**

*A potted version of the Renaissance is going to be even harder than Napoleon!*

*And you can look ahead to Versailles. I think I should leave that one to you.*

*When is it going to be? We can't do this every year; unless they promote you to Director or something. Maybe 1938?*

*We've sort of promised them a beach holiday next time. Maybe a short week near Versailles and a long week in Brittany?*

*I'll ask our onion man about good places to go. He likes chatting to me, because I'm just about his only customer with enough French.*

However, when the Desmoulins children turned up at the hotel as arranged, in the afternoon, they had another proposal. A cinema in Melun, just a short train ride away, was putting on a Chaplin film on Saturday afternoon, in English, but most of it was silent. Would they all like to go together? Yes, that was a great idea. A delicate problem arose – who was paying for the trains and the cinema? And they would also need something to eat in Melun. Mr Anderson thought the best chance of making an equitable settlement with the least fuss would be to leave it all to the two bankers. He entrusted Robert with a message to his uncle, that they would be very pleased to make up a party together, and that he hoped they could add up all the costs and share them equally. If only he had known, M. Lesage had had exactly the same idea.

Jim said he could organize another game for them which he had recently learned at the Scouts. It was taken from Rudyard Kipling's book, and was called "Kim's game". They all knew something of the *Jungle Books*, and the Anderson children were familiar with the *Just So* stories, but only Jim had read *Kim*. He told the other four to go to the far side of the garden and to come back only when they were called. They had the garden to themselves at the time, so they went and sat at another table. When they came back they found that Jim had put something on their own table, and covered it with their mother's shawl. He explained that he had put out a dozen items. They would have just two minutes to see them, by Mr Anderson's watch, and then each would have to write down what they were. Mrs Anderson had not only contributed her shawl, but had gone up to their rooms with him and had been able to

find some paper and four pencils, as well as collecting up twelve small objects. When time was up it was Pauline's turn to shine. She had scored twelve out of twelve, and read out her list in French. No one else had got more than ten but at least all of them had added a few words of the other language to their vocabulary. They played the game five times altogether, by which time they were running out of small objects, from the combined resources of their own pockets, Mrs Anderson's handbag, and another visit to the bedrooms. After they had had tea or other drinks they went out to top up their supply of picture postcards, and then after that the two French children left them and they returned to the hotel until it was time to go out for their dinner.

They took a morning train, so that they could have a short look around Melun, and see one of its old churches. Not much was said about the fact that it was still in use, or that the French family were Roman Catholics, and made a short pause in front of an old painting of the Virgin Mary. The Anderson parents thought that any discussion of the Reformation had better wait for some other occasion.

M. Lesage directed them to what he thought was the best place for a light lunch, and they were at the cinema in time to get nine seats in a row. In the train back to Fontainebleau they discussed the film. Everybody had been much impressed, but the children said it was not what they had been expecting, like the older Chaplin films, and were a little disappointed.

Sunday morning was spent in the garden, talking and seeing to their postcards. Lunch had been fixed for what seemed, to the Scottish children, the very early hour of noon.



It began with artichokes, which intrigued them. They had been seeing them in the shops, but had never eaten them before. It went on in a very leisurely way through several other courses, each accompanied by its own wine, and finished with cheeses and “a piece of fruit”. The children were given a very little of the wine, mixed with more or less water according to their ages, which the Anderson three drank somewhat reluctantly.

The children by this time were communicating freely in a mixture of French and English. They had evidently enjoyed the occasion, and had certainly liked the food, although Ann said that sitting at table for more than two hours was a bit much. The children went together to the Lesages’ flat for the rest of the afternoon, and afterwards reported that they had mostly listened to gramophone records. The Anderson parents returned to their hotel. They were all ready to settle once again for just soup to end their day. This time it was *vichyssoise*, and Mrs Anderson explained to them how it was made.

Monday saw them back in the forest, where they walked further into the eastern part, this time paying more attention to the woodland plants at ground level, and seeing how many they could identify. They followed signs to another of the named trees. It had recently died, and was literally coming apart – the bark had mostly gone, and there was a notice warning visitors not to approach too closely, for fear of falling branches. It struck John as a particularly good subject, and he took several photographs with his father’s old camera. Ann used up the rest of the film for pictures of the family, and got John to take one of her, although she

knew their father had already taken a lot – as many as possible when they weren't expecting it. They would have to wait until he had developed and printed the films, but he said he was sure he was getting good results from his Leica, and at least there should be plenty to choose from. That was the big advantage of 35 mm.

The Lesage children had gone off on some family visit, so in the afternoon the Andersons had to be content with a visit to the post office to send off their cards, and then to amuse themselves in the garden, where they got into a discussion with their parents about the differences between life in Kirkton and life in Fontainebleau. They had learned about French schools from their new friends, and Jim in particular had been interested in the choices you had in France after leaving school. Just before they went out to their restaurant, Robert came to deliver a note from his mother, asking them all to the flat on the Friday, to eat a family meal with them for their last evening. They gave him a note to take back to accept the invitation. They reminded him that they would be away in Paris the next day, and he made a rendez-vous with them for Wednesday afternoon.

They had thought out a way of keeping together in Paris, as it turned out that the main item remaining on Mrs Anderson's shopping list was a French cookery book, and her husband told her that he would also like to go into a bookshop, and he had the address of one on the left bank that would certainly have the kind of thing she wanted, as well as something for himself and, at least possibly, things that would be suitable for the children. So they could go there first, and then have an early lunch in one of the places

usually frequented by students – who would mostly be on vacation. After that it would be an easy walk to the Chapelle Royale, not far from Notre Dame where they had been already. It was one of the few places in Paris he remembered from a brief wartime visit, when one of the officers had recommended it to him as something extraordinary. A suitable cookery book was found easily enough, and a popular guide to wild flowers, which would be a good source for their French names. Ann found an illustrated book of fables that took her fancy. It was a little on the expensive side but, as if to compensate, the boys said they couldn't see anything they wanted. They had an excellent and surprisingly cheap lunch, and took time to see a little more of the Ile de la Cité and the bridge they had to cross.

When they got into the chapel the sunlight was just beginning to come in from the west, through the great stained glass windows. Mr Anderson got the reactions he had hoped for. John in particular was entranced, and stood still for what was for him a long time, taking it all in. They had plenty of time to catch the return train, so they decided to walk to the station, and look for just one last item on the way. They soon found what they wanted – a shop selling gramophone records, and the two boys each managed to locate one that they had particularly liked among those that they had listened to at the Lesage flat.

Wednesday morning was given over to going through most parts of the palace that were open to visitors, and the children were told to take note of which pictures on the walls they specially liked, so that on Thursday they could go back and have another look at them, for once with note-

books in hand. They could then try to find out more about the artists, and in some cases the subjects, with the help of the Carnegie Library back home.

On Friday they split up in a different way. Mr Anderson went off with his own boys and Robert on a long forest walk, mainly for more photography and exercise, taking picnic food with them, while Ann and her mother spent most of the day with Pauline and her aunt in their flat. Mme Lesage had invited two of her women friends to coffee in mid morning, and they also had a very simple lunch together. The Andersons gathered later in the afternoon to sort out their baggage and the additions they had made to it, before their farewell supper with the Lesages.

They said the Lesages must try to visit Scotland next year, and if they could bring their nephew and niece, so much the better. M. Lesage told them that in fact he had been beginning to have some such idea himself, and that he was considering the purchase of a car. He said that they could easily afford to run one, but that until now he had not seen much use for it. They discussed the practicalities of a tour that would take in a few places in England, on the way to Kirkton, from where, as Mrs Anderson pointed out, it would be easy to make one or two day trips to Edinburgh. Perhaps they could include some of the sites associated with Marie Stuart? The children volunteered to write to each other, each in their own language.

Their homeward journey was uneventful, simply reversing what they had done coming south, except that the Channel was in its more usual state, with the sea rather more than “choppy”, but it turned out that Jim was the only one who

felt even slightly seasick. When they arrived home, Mrs Anderson remarked that it had been a good holiday, but she had this feeling that it was good to come back to your own familiar house. Ann said “me too”, and no one contradicted them.

**Pillow talk**

*Your great plan worked far better than I ever thought it would.*

*You should have more confidence. But I have to admit that it was good luck that saved it. I could never have guessed that the children would make these friends.*

*Very few fathers would take all the trouble you did.*

*At least I'm sure now that it was worth it. We've given them a lot to think about.*

*I hope the Lesages really do come here next year.*

*In the meantime we have to try to keep our three up to scratch with their letter writing, without badgering them too much.*

*At least we can make sure they send Christmas cards, and we must find a nice calendar.*

*John will be back with his favourite teacher tomorrow.*

*Won't that be nice for them both!*

## An old song

ON THE FIRST day of the new school year my mother took me there. Miss Scott said she had been told I would be coming, and asked me to go and find a desk to sit at, anywhere I liked. She would be sorting things out later. The girls were going to the side where the windows were, and the boys to the other one, where a blank wall separated our room from the next classroom. The desks were each for two children. When everyone was seated the roll was called, and we had to answer "Here". I was listening to find out what John's other name was. It was Anderson (which made him first on the list) and I immediately made the connection with the Burns song, which we had sung, along with some of his other ones, at my last school. Surely John must know it as well. He must also have been listening, to find out that I answered to the name of Alison Stewart.

Then something very unexpected happened, and it was all his doing. Miss Scott announced that she was going to move us around, and was about to begin, when he raised his hand. "Please Miss". "What is it, John?". "I've already met Alison. Can I sit next to her?" There was a sudden hush, but if Miss Scott was surprised she did her best to pretend not to be. She just said: "That's for Alison to decide – what do you say, Alison?" My face was burning, but I managed to get the words out: "That's all right, if he wants to". And so began a very long story, which isn't really over yet.

It was contrary to the usual customs of ten-year-olds in 1936, but in fact we weren't quite the first. There were the Thompson twins, a boy and a girl, who wouldn't be separated, and there were two who came from adjacent cottages on an outlying farm, who did everything together, including their daily two-mile walk to and from school.

From now on, my future mother-in-law had to share John's attachments, not only to Ann and Miss Scott, but also to me. I think it is fair enough to say, however, that she didn't lose a son, but gained a daughter. The phrase was of course used at our wedding, many years later, but she and I knew well enough that it had happened long ago, in what then already seemed the remote past. It might have been more difficult with Ann, but I think she worked it out that, if John thought I was all right, it must be so, and she also found out very quickly that I was pleased indeed to have acquired a little sister. John, in his cunning way, did

his best to let her see that she was not being shut out, and we did many things as a rather unusual little three-some. And when John went off with the other boys for any reason, Ann and I often kept each other company.

I had enough sense to realize that I had better tell my parents what had happened before anyone else did, so at tea-time that day I tried to make a funny story out of it, and in fact this went quite well, and they both laughed. My mother, however, was quick to see that this was not the end of the matter. "What do we do now?" she asked. My father said: "I suppose we must see this young man, and ask if his intentions are honourable". I could see that it was some kind of joke, although I didn't know exactly what it meant. My mother asked if I liked this strange boy, and I said yes, I did. I had met him at the Sunday school, and he had been very nice to me the first time I went there. My father, trying to take it lightly, said: "In that case we must get to know him. I know who his father is and I'll phone him from the office tomorrow" – at that time neither we nor the Andersons had telephones in our houses.

I don't know exactly how the negotiations went, but they ended with the Stewarts being invited to lunch at the Andersons on the Saturday, ostensibly to welcome them as newcomers to Kirkton, and as members of our church. This was something slightly unusual, but I suppose John's parents had been impressed by the idea of party meals in France. If so, they were careful not to do anything too showy, but did serve a good red wine that they had brought



home, and Mrs Anderson made *boeuf bourguignon* for the main course. John whispered to me that his mother had said it just couldn't go wrong. She had made a big jug of lemonade for the children.

John was seated between me and Ann on one side of the table, and Jim between my parents on the other. Looking back on this memorable occasion, I can see how John had got some of his ways of doing things from his father, and how the two of them actually worked together to put everybody at their ease. Mr Anderson soon had my mother telling him about how she had been brought up in a remote place in Argyll.

She had just completed her nurse's training when war broke out, and she had decided to get into the army nursing service. He told her he had been in the army, but had been lucky enough not to have seen the inside of a hospital. My father overheard this and said, loudly enough for everybody to hear, that it had been *his* best bit of luck ever.

When Mrs Anderson was talking to me, my father tried to do his social duty by Jim, who was next to him on his other side, but I could see that Jim was feeling very much the odd one out. I decided that I must be extra nice to him but, as we were on opposite sides of the table, it wasn't easy to do much while the meal went on. For his part, John was being careful to give at least as much attention to his little sister as he did to me. Her father, for once, was tending to give her too little. But of course, the children didn't have

much chance to talk, as all four adults had plenty to say to each other.

As it turned out, absolutely nothing was said about our sitting together at school. The parents on both sides seemed satisfied that the other family was much like themselves, and that the children were behaving normally, and tacitly just left it at that. Maybe this was what ten-year-old boys and girls did nowadays.

The four of us went out to the garden and set up deck chairs. We did not take up any game, but had plenty to say to each other, and I had my chance to make friends with Jim, who soon thawed. The parents had coffee in the sitting room, and lingered over it for half an hour or so, when my father came out to say that he and my mother were leaving, but that Mrs Anderson had suggested I might like to stay on for a bit, when one of the boys – she didn't say which – would perhaps see me home. It was of course John who did so, and on the way we had a rather more intimate conversation than we had ever been able to until then. His main aim was also mine, although I knew I mustn't say so, that we should get together as much as possible.

Was it "love"? Perhaps not, as adults use the word, but it was certainly spontaneous and mutual affection, and it never got any less as the years went by.

Not long after this, I remarked to John that I liked his parents a lot, and that his mother in particular seemed to be treating me as an extra daughter. I hoped that he liked mine equally well, and that he would become as much part

of the Stewart family as I seemed to have become one of the Andersons. He assured me that he did like both my mother and my father, but said not to rush things. He had his own methods, he said, and that he most certainly did. He never pushed himself forward, but somehow my mother found herself automatically turning to him when she needed some little job done, when her husband was not around, or which was something that his gammy leg would have made difficult. They had indeed “gained a son”.

The Andersons had got into the way of making Hallowe'en their big party of the year. My parents were the only adult guests, but Jim and Ann also had friends there (his a boy called Alex, and hers a girl, Maggie), and a good time was had by all. None of the children, and perhaps not all of the adults, had ever read Burns's account of all the magical procedures for finding out who you were going to marry, so there were no revelations for John and me, just a series of what had become children's games. Two different sets of guisers were invited in, both of which had gone for the same option of singing, one group a few of the traditional Scots songs, and the other one some of the things we were just beginning to pick up in those days, from the wireless.

I wished that my parents could have returned some of this hospitality at Christmas or New Year, but it had been decided that we would go “home” to my grandparents, this year at least, so that I could keep up my friendship with my Stewart cousins, two girls both older than me. We had a good holiday, and I met a few of my old school friends as

well, but all the time I was conscious of John's absence, which left an empty space in my days. I was very pleased to get not only a card from him but also a surprisingly long and amusing letter – the first of the many that I was to accumulate whenever we were separated in the future. I had written to him also. My letter was shorter and, I am sure, not nearly so amusing, but I did say that I was missing him a lot, and couldn't get back soon enough, which was the most outright expression of my feelings that I had so far permitted myself.

I remember being envious of John because his family had got into the habit of taking the children to a pantomime in Edinburgh, during the Christmas school holiday, and I had never been to one. If I hadn't gone off to Galloway they would almost certainly have taken me too. However, when I said something to him about the pantomime after the holiday was over, he said I hadn't missed much. He and his father had decided that they would drop pantomimes in 1937, and that at the next opportunity they would go to some other kind of theatre performance. I think Jim was of the same opinion, but Ann liked pantomime and wouldn't have agreed with this proposal, if anyone had asked her. Mrs Anderson had just said that pantomimes were certainly no longer what they had been when she was little.

At the beginning of the school year my parents had taken up another thing they had been thinking about. They didn't know very much about music, but they had gathered a small collection of records, and had begun to enjoy

listening to performances on the radio. They asked me if I had any idea of playing an instrument, but I had never really thought about it. My father discovered that his assistant in the business was a music enthusiast, and asked him how to set about giving me a chance. His advice, which I am sure was sound, and in fact quite orthodox, was to see how I got on with a piano. He gave my father the name and address of a lady in Kirkton who had a good local reputation as a teacher, and she also was duly consulted. She recommended going to a place in Edinburgh that always had a large selection of second-hand instruments, and that could be relied on to supply one that was in good condition, at a reasonable price. As she said, it was sensible to start in this way, so that if the idea was dropped we could dispose of the piano with little loss.

My father was having a very busy time at work, so he deputed the task of making a purchase to my mother, who spent a day in Edinburgh and came back confident that she had made a good bargain. Within a few days it arrived, the next day a tuner was called in, and then my lessons began. To begin with, they were on two week-day afternoons, as soon as I got home from school, because my teacher had several adult students who could only find time later in the evenings, and her Saturdays were also fully taken up. After a few weeks she pronounced that she didn't think I would ever be a great concert pianist, but that if I could keep up a strict schedule of practice I would

be an above-average amateur player, and I would get much enjoyment out of it, as well as giving pleasure to others. She also pointed out that once I had a basic knowledge of music I could try out some other instruments to adopt instead of, or as well as, the piano.

My Christmas present from my father was a book that was full of information about such matters. My teacher evidently knew what she was talking about, and music has been my dominant interest ever since. I took the “as well as” option, and progressed through a series of better pianos until, on my fortieth birthday John gave me the “baby grand” that I still play every day. And I can give a respectable performance on not just one other instrument, but on several, both wood-wind and stringed.

In a perfect world, John would also have learned to play an instrument, and we could have played together. He said he was quite sure he couldn’t, and anyway, I would always need an audience, and he would always be there to provide one, very willingly. In fact, he went one better in later years, after his voice had broken. It turned out that he was musical after all, and could sing the old Scots songs, and eventually many others, to my accompaniment.

## The qualifying year

MISS SCOTT NOW found that she had two pupils vying for top place, and that they had obviously formed a close bond, unusual at that age, which intrigued her. John was an all-rounder as far as the basic school subjects were concerned, while Alison was almost his equal there, but shone even more when some imagination was required. She seemed to have read much more than he had, in both poetry and prose, and was well acquainted with all the usual children's classics. It might be no more than what you would expect from the only child of well educated parents, or perhaps it indicated the beginnings of something more.

The first homework for the class, as ever, was to produce an essay on what they had done in the holidays. John had an abundance of material about his visit to France, which she read with great interest, a little envious, as schoolteachers always are, of what parents can occasionally do for their children's education. Alison, on the other hand, wrote a much shorter piece, on the fairly banal subject of moving house, with a few comments on what had struck her most about Kirkton. However, it was remarkably well written for a ten-year-old. So much so that Miss Scott felt obliged to

ask, had Alison had much help from her parents? Like most children from good homes in those days, Alison had been brought up to believe in total honesty, so she hesitated a little, before replying that she had occasionally checked a few facts with her mother, but that the writing was all her own.

Both of these essays, and a few more, had to be read aloud to the class, and it was then that John was really outstanding. Miss Scott felt a most unprofessional satisfaction in the way that her favourite outclassed them all, not only in his delivery, but also in the confidence with which he dealt with all questions, in the ensuing discussion. However, she managed to praise Alison also, while remarking that she needed more practice in reading to an audience. She awarded the highest mark to John, and just one point less to Alison, for the whole exercise.

Probably, it was partly curiosity about how they related to each other that caused her to keep both of them back together for a few minutes at the end of the day, but if so she was disappointed, because each spoke to her independently, as if the other wasn't there. She asked Alison what she was reading at present, and if she had kept any of her old essays, that she could bring along.

Then, turning to John, she surprised them both, by saying that she had just had an idea. She had a secret, and had decided to share it with them. If she told them about it, would they please keep it to themselves, or only pass it on, as a secret, to their own parents. She had found the most interesting part of John's essay was the short section about the Renaissance, as encountered at Fontainebleau. As his



father had told him, but perhaps had not emphasized enough, the most important centre for Renaissance studies was Florence. She had been going there every summer for several years, to see as much as she could of the architecture and the great art galleries, as well as other interesting places in Tuscany, while in Kirkton she spent a great deal of her spare time on the literature and on historical studies.

So when she told people she was off to her old home in the Borders it was true, but she didn't actually stay there for very long in the summer. Now she was trying to think of a way in which she could spend time with them to show them some of her art books and discuss the most famous paintings and sculptures, without stirring up other people's curiosity. It would in some ways be easier to do this now there were two of them who she thought might both be interested. She waited for a response, and John thought he could answer for both of them, to say it sounded like a good idea, but they really must let their parents know what was going on. She said yes, that was quite right, and would they please do so soon. Alison just said she agreed with John, and that if something could be arranged, she would like to take part.

Before they left, however, John asked, as tactfully as he could, why was it a secret? Miss Scott said she just wanted to have a life of her own, and didn't want the people of Kirkton to gossip about her and her fancy ideas. She hoped that now she had told them about her other life, it wouldn't somehow leak out.

John went to Alison's house with her on the way home, as he often did now, and stayed long enough to help her

explain Miss Scott's strange story. Mrs Stewart said she would discuss it with her husband. It seemed an odd tale, but it might provide a new interest for them. As for keeping quiet about it, she thought it would be easiest if Miss Scott came to their house, maybe one day a week after tea, when there were few people about, and brought some of her pictures with her. John could arrange to have his tea with them on those days.

The plan was soon put into effect, and if any of the good people of Kirkton noticed that Miss Scott had become a regular visitor at the Stewart house, they would have thought little of it. She spent an hour or so on Friday evenings with Alison and John, and made it something like a children's evening-school class in art appreciation. She took Brunelleschi as the subject of her introductory discussion, saying that according to some people he was the very founder of the Renaissance. She showed them pictures of his work in architecture, bronze casting and painting, starting with the famous dome of the cathedral – telling them about its extraordinary history and its construction, and doing her best to explain his innovations in the use of perspective in painting.

To follow on, she had given herself a schedule for the rest of the school year, that went through the list of the major painters and sculptors, and included an outline of what was to be seen in Pisa and Arezzo. She tried to explain to them that although they were concentrating on art, the Renaissance had also changed the way people thought, and they should keep this in mind when they began to study history and science in future. Their evenings ended eventually

with a very brief introduction to Dante. She said of him that he was much too difficult at their age, but that she was sure they would come back to him some day. In the meantime, when they heard someone say, jokingly: “Abandon hope, all you who enter here”, they should remember that it is a quotation from this great poet, and that educated people all over Europe used to be familiar with his works.

On her first visit Miss Scott sat for a few minutes with Alison’s parents, but only to give the briefest of explanations of what she was proposing to do. On each of her subsequent ones they did little more than exchange rather perfunctory greetings. Alison had a comfortable chair in her room for the teacher, and had imported a couple of stools for herself and John. Miss Scott hardly had a chance to become a close friend of the family, even if she had had some such hope. Apart from whatever pleasure this extra work gave her, her reward was a book token, for a generous amount, appropriate to expensive illustrated art books, paid for jointly by the two families.

The Friday evenings were obviously aimed primarily at John, but she was a naturally gifted teacher, with a passion for medieval Florence, so Alison got drawn into it, and certainly learned a lot. They agreed that some day the two of them would go there and see for themselves, but of course by the time they were able to plan their own travels, world events had intervened, and many years were to pass before they had the opportunity to go to Italy.

Miss Scott never had the chat with John that she had once promised, but contented herself with a few remarks to him after their Friday evening sessions, and they didn’t amount

to very much, beyond saying that his interests were obviously pretty wide, and that he would get a better idea of where he was going in the first three years of the Academy. It didn't provide any options, other than whether you joined the Latin class or not. Certainly he would have to, as you needed Latin to get into the university. She exhorted him to take it seriously, and said it had been a great help to her when she had had to learn both modern and medieval Tuscan Italian, and even to work her way through poems in Provençal. He was not at all sure that he wanted to follow her there, but decided that if he had to do Latin at all, he might as well give it a go and try eventually to take it at the higher level for his leaving certificate. Jim had been explaining the system to him.

Mr Anderson used his first available bank holiday to take his children and Alison to Edinburgh, to introduce them to the National Gallery – having confirmed that it would be open on the holiday. He then treated them to lunch in one of the big department stores, where he thought they would most easily find the kind of food they liked. Having given them an hour or so of high culture in the forenoon, he then announced that they had earned a visit to the National Museum. It was a favourite place for boys, because it had a great many working models, powered by compressed air, that could be set in motion by pressing a button. To his surprise, Alison and Ann seemed to like them as much as the boys did. All four also took an intelligent interest in some of the archaeological and anthropological exhibits, and in one bit of public health propaganda, that showed how poor rubbish disposal could breed flies.

Both families decided that they would not travel anywhere in the Easter school holidays. Their gardens needed attention. Mr Stewart could do any of the work except for digging, so in the evenings he undertook to mow the lawns and trim their edges at both houses, while Mr Anderson dug over both vegetable plots, with a little help from Jim. John was given a demonstration and instructions, and undertook to see to all the many rose bushes, and the girls did a great deal of weeding, working together in both gardens, and finding plenty to talk about. Finally, under close supervision, it was the children who did all the sowing of flower and vegetable seeds. Looking back on this spring in later years, John thought it was when the two families first became really united. On Easter Monday they all took a day off, packed picnic lunches, and went by bus to the starting place for a long walk over the hills, having worked out where they could catch another bus home. Mr Stewart stayed behind, saying it was time he got on with painting his front gate and a few other bits and pieces.

**Pillow talk**

*Who would ever have thought we would make such close friends as this?*

*It's your son John we have to thank for it.*

*He's your son too.*

*Yes, but I think the way he decides things for himself comes all from you.*

*I hope it doesn't land him in trouble.*

*It hasn't done you any harm, has it?*

*You could say that. Quite the contrary, in my opinion.*

*The one to watch out for is Jim. I think he is feeling a bit left out by the other three, and he is practically in his teens, which is always the worst age.*

*Yes, I've noticed that he seems a little unhappy. He has the Scouts, but I don't think he's all that keen on them.*

*We'll see how he gets on at their camp.*

## Highland Mary

JOHN WAS of course top of the class, but I also collected a prize as runner-up. Both had been chosen by Miss Scott, and were just right, although out of the usual run of school prizes. His was a good up-to-date school atlas, and mine was a collection of Burns songs, with music. I am sure she had checked to make sure that it included my favourite one. And I checked, myself, that it had another one whose relevance was unknown to Miss Scott.

After the prize-giving ceremony, she sought us out, with another of her surprises. She told us that we had not seen the last of her. She had managed to arrange to become a part-time teacher in the Academy, while enrolled as a PhD student at Edinburgh. She said she wouldn't even try to explain exactly what her subject was. Some day far into the future we might be able and willing to read the thesis that she would have to write. It would involve spending her summer holidays this year and next, on some narrowly focused studies in Florence, and a great deal of reading,

for which she would have to depend as far as possible on the Edinburgh libraries. She would be looking out for us in our new school, where she would be teaching history.

In the meanwhile, it was my mother who had taken the initiative in arranging a joint holiday. We were all going to her old home in Argyll. She, Mrs Anderson, John, Ann and I would set off in advance for the first two weeks, when Jim would be at his first Scout camp, and then he and the two fathers would join us for the second half of a four-week holiday. I had been there before – my last visit had been in 1935 – so I was able to assure the others that they would like it. It was by the sea, and had other attractions, like a pair of friendly dogs, a cat, and very likely at least one kitten to play with.

My mother was able to convince the Andersons that there was plenty of room in the house, and that my grandparents would really be pleased to have them. They liked having children around. They were highlanders – Campbells – and were proud of the old traditions of hospitality, so it was absolutely out of the question for the Andersons to pay for their accommodation. But if they would like to bring a present that would really be appreciated, a case of claret – nothing very expensive – would please the old people more than anything else. Mrs Anderson also fixed it that she would pay for half of the extra groceries that we would take from the Kirkton shops. There was a housekeeper, but the two mothers would have to organize the additional household work and local shopping while we were there.



John's father remarked that if two women could do this peaceably for a month they would be friends for life. They did, and he was right. They were.

It took us nearly all of one day to reach our destination, by rail, with changes in Edinburgh and Glasgow to Oban, where we were met by a hired car, as arranged in advance – a large one that just had room for us all and our heap of baggage. It took us south along an ever narrower road, until we came at last to the isolated house, on the seaward side of it. When it came in sight, Mrs Anderson exclaimed: "Oh, doesn't that look beautiful!" – and went on to say that she had been expecting something a little bleak, like some of the other Victorian houses in the Highlands. This one was indeed cleverly situated in a sheltered dip in the hill, on the north side of a little estuary, facing south-west so that it had a view of the sea, and sheltered from the north by the trees that had been planted when it was built, mostly sycamores.

Over the years I had found out, little by little, about my mother's life and about the origins of this house. My grandfather, it seemed, had somehow become a successful business man in late Victorian times, based in Glasgow, where I think he had been essentially a *rentier*, with most of his money coming from whole streets of middle-class tenements in that city.

Soon after my mother was born, he had decided to build himself a country house, and as he was not really enormously rich, he had done it on a modest scale. He himself

had spent his childhood in Argyll, by the sea, so naturally his choice of location had taken him back to these roots. While he was still active in business he had retained a *pied-à-terre* in the city.

My grandmother was the younger by a few years, but both of them now seemed very old to me. A lot of their wealth had been passed on to my uncles, who lived in Glasgow, to carry on the business, which had now turned mostly to dealing in “commodities”. It was said that they had not been very successful, but were still well off. What was eventually to prove more important in my own story, as I was to learn much later, was that the old man had already given my mother more than her fair share, with the injunction that it was to be invested as securely as possible, and passed on to her children, unless it was needed for some real emergency. As it turned out, no such emergency ever arose – and I was an only child.

My grandfather had had a theory that boys ought to look after themselves, but that girls should, if possible, be guaranteed financial independence. Besides which, notoriously, my mother had been his favourite, and when I was born, as his only granddaughter, I had exerted the same charm over him, and confirmed him in his belief that he had done the right thing. Then on top of everything else, he got on well with my father, whom he saw as both a war hero and a successful man of business, and compared him favourably to his sons who, in his opinion, were neither. The unfortunate result of all this, of course, was

that it had alienated my uncles from my mother, and all my life I met them only once, at my grandmother's funeral. They did not come to my grandfather's. I have four male cousins that I haven't ever met at all. I believe that until she had got herself safely married to him, my father knew nothing of this part of her story.

And one more thing. My mother's name, Mary, had been my grandfather's choice, imposed rather unwillingly on my grandmother, who knew more than he did about the obscure and ambivalent history of the original Mary Campbell, immortalized by Burns. Never mind all that, he had said, she will be another Bonny Mary of Argyll. Which, fortunately, she was.

# Contretemps in Kirkton

**T**HE BUS hired by the Scouts to bring them home deposited the boys at the Scout hall. Jim didn't say anything to any of the others, but collected his rucksack from the heap of baggage and walked off home as fast as he could. It was a Saturday afternoon, so Mr Anderson was at home waiting for him. Jim dropped his bag at the foot of the stairs and took a seat in the living room. It was all too clear that something was wrong.

Before his father could so much as welcome him home, Jim burst out: "I'm leaving the Scouts!". His father asked what was the matter, and got a rather confused story about bullying. As far as he could make out, it was mainly about something that had happened on their last night. The four "patrol leaders" had got together and attacked Jim, pulling him out of his sleeping bag, taking off his pyjama trousers, and beating him by turns with a hard brush. They told the other boys in the tent that if any of them interfered, they also would be beaten, and none of them did anything. Mr

Anderson assured himself that there had been no sexual assault, and asked Jim if there were any marks and if so, could he see them. When he saw that the beating had actually drawn blood, he went out and called on the family doctor, who lived nearby, and asked him to come round – in those days doctors did much of their work by making house calls.

They asked Jim if he had complained to the Scoutmaster. Jim said he had, and had only got the reply that this was an old tradition, and happened every year. The doctor agreed with Mr Anderson that something ought to be done. He had no other engagements, so they set off immediately to call upon the Scoutmaster, who lived as a lodger down in the main street.

Mr Anderson recounted Jim's story to him, and asked in particular if it was true that Jim had told him about it. He said yes, but it was nothing out of the ordinary, and did not call for any action on his part. He had heard that the bullies chose their victim at a sort of formal meeting, earlier in the day. They would have found "reasons" for selecting Jim but, he admitted, these could not be good ones. Mr Anderson said that he himself had been a Scout in their early days, and had always supported the movement. Goings-on of this kind would have been unthinkable in those days and, even if they had happened, it would have been incredible that a Scoutmaster would have done nothing about them. He had heard of stories that got into the *News of the World*, but had always assumed that these were rare deviations. They were mostly based on court cases, and the fact that the perpetrators were punished – usually it was the Scoutmasters themselves who were involved – gave some

assurance that such things were unlikely to happen very often. He said he would be very reluctant to stir up trouble in the town, or to make a report to the police, especially as there had apparently been no sexual abuse. But he said that if the Scoutmaster did not immediately resign he would have no option but to take action – he would begin by reporting the matter to the Scout authorities in Edinburgh and to the police.

At this point the doctor joined in, and said that he entirely agreed with Mr Anderson. He had occasionally been involved as a witness in domestic cases that were hardly any worse than this one, and he was sure that a prosecution would succeed. He agreed, however, that it would be better for all concerned, especially for Jim himself, if the man would simply resign. There were bound to be unsavoury rumours and gossip, but if they all agreed to say nothing, the matter would soon be forgotten, and if a more responsible new Scoutmaster could be found, it would be impressed upon him that nothing like this should be allowed to happen in future. He personally would have a talk with anyone who took up the position.

Mr Anderson left his Argyll address with the doctor, and travelled there with Mr Stewart and Jim on the Monday. A few days later he had a letter from the doctor to say that the parents of all the Kirkton Scouts had been informed that the Scoutmaster had resigned, no reason being given, and that action was being taken to recruit a new one.

Jim, however, said he had no intention of continuing to take part in Scout activities. He was asked to say nothing to anybody about it, not even to his brother. John realized,

however, that something untoward must have happened. He announced that he had never liked the idea of the Scouts and had no intention of joining them. When she heard this, Ann was prompt to put in an early notice that she wasn't going to join the Guides either. Mr Anderson said it was all a great pity, but he wouldn't try to argue them out of their decisions. Perhaps an active family life could do just as much for them.

He had a long talk with his wife about it, enjoining her to talk to nobody else. She pointed out that the actual villains of the piece were getting off scot-free, and said that if she had been there she would rather have gone straight to the police. He replied that that had been his own first reaction, but he had worked it out that the boys who knew about it would deduce from Jim's defection and the Scoutmaster's sudden resignation, that some action had been taken. Eventually, if any of the assailants were still around, the new Scoutmaster would talk to them in general terms, without specific reference to Jim's case. They would at least know that they were being watched. He would hate to see the story dragged into the magistrate's court and reported on by the newspapers. He was sure that what he and the doctor had done was in Jim's best interests. The boy had the rest of the school holiday to sort things out in his head, and they could give him some advice on how to cope with it all when they went back in August.

Argyll has a reputation for its rainy – or more often drizzling – weather, but they were lucky and had a great deal of sunshine. The temperature of the sea came as a pleasant surprise to those of the party who only knew the east coast.

A fortnight spent mostly on the little sheltered beach below the house, and exploring the rock pools, was just what was needed to restore Jim's equanimity. The time flew past and all too soon they had to make the journey home. They all declared that this had been one of their best holidays ever, and they would certainly like to do it again.

**Pillow talk**

*That was my idea of a good holiday, even if Mary and I had to work for it.*

*Yes, I feel I had a real break. It was too bad that I had to arrive with all of Jim's troubles on my mind.*

*I'm sure we haven't heard the last of that story. It's bound to get out. The other boys in Jim's tent are going to talk about it.*

*Maybe not. They don't show up very well. And anything they do say isn't going to do Jim any harm.*

*What about Jim himself? He won't ever forget.*

*No, that's the worst of it. But both of us can talk to him and get him to see that he is not being blamed.*

*I wonder why they did pick on him?*

*He's not at all like John. I can't imagine anybody attacking **him** like that.*



*No, and even less, him doing any such attacking!  
What a strange thought.*

*I suppose I know more about boys than you do. I  
was one myself once.*

*You mean most of them are capable of such  
things?*

*Something like that.*

*But **you** never did anything like it, I hope.*

*No, I didn't. And I wasn't a victim either. But I  
know that similar kinds of bullying went on.*

*Maybe it would help if Jim had more friends. He  
doesn't even spend much time with Alex these days.*

*It's his birthday soon. Maybe we can at least get  
Alex to come to a little party. He has a sister too!*

## Visitors

JUST AFTER Easter, Mrs Anderson had received a letter from Mme Lesage. It was in French, but the writer had gone to some trouble to keep the language simple. She regretted that neither she nor her husband thought they could put it in English. In fact it was easy enough for the Andersons to read.

It said that the Lesages and the Desmoulins had decided that what they would really like to do in the coming summer was for all four adults and two children to travel together. Would there be any holiday fortnight when the Andersons would be at home? They had worked it out that it would be best to use the trains, and they would greatly appreciate it if Mrs Anderson could advise them on a suitable hotel in the Kirkton area as their base, just as the Andersons had used Fontainebleau. They thought this would be better than the constant moving involved in a car tour up through England, and in any case it would not be possible to pack all of them and their baggage into one ordinary family car. They had been looking into the guidebooks and it seemed that Edinburgh alone had many things to see, and that there were other places within easy reach for day trips. The children had only one idea in their heads,

which was to renew their friendship with the Anderson ones. That would have the advantage of improving their English. She thought that there would probably be a suitable hotel in Kirkton, less expensive than in Edinburgh, for example, and very likely quieter and more agreeable.

The first question was easily answered – in the last fortnight of the school holidays Mrs Anderson and the children would be free, and Mr Anderson would at least have the weekends and might be induced to take a day or two off work. As to a hotel, Mrs Anderson had had another idea, which she explained briefly to the rest of her family, and proposed to discuss it with my parents before answering Mme Lesage.

So after tea that evening she came and had a long discussion with my mother and father. I was allowed to listen in and soon realized that it concerned me, as well as the Anderson young, so I paid close attention. She had worked out a scheme – with several variations, in fact – for accommodating the French people in our two houses. My mother thought about it briefly, but said she didn't think it would work. For one thing, she didn't think French visitors would accept hospitality on this scale, especially when the Stewarts were completely unknown to them. Mrs Anderson admitted disconsolately that that was just what her husband had said. Unfortunately, as they all knew, there was really no suitable hotel in the town, but only two "commercial" ones, patronized almost exclusively by "travellers", without gardens or any such amenities, and

functioning more as rather sordid pubs, than as agreeable places to stay.

But then my mother sprung *her* solution. Our next-door neighbour, a Mrs Ramsay, had recently been widowed, and her children were all married and had their own homes. She had told my mother that she had been thinking of turning her house into a bed-and-breakfast place. She had realized that more people were moving around by car, and that there was a growing demand for reasonably priced simple accommodation. If she took on just one live-in helper she could easily cope with running it. They could ask if this plan was going ahead, and if she would be able to take in a party of six people by the end of July.

Mrs Anderson said: "Why don't we just go and ask her now?", so they did, and got Mrs Ramsay's response, that this request was just what she needed to encourage her to get started, and it would be quite easy to put things in order in good time. Could they confirm a booking as soon as possible?

The outcome was a letter to Mme Lesage that was passed around for approval before it was sent off. Since the children were all concerned in it, they were told what was being proposed. None of us had any objections!

It explained that hotels in Scotland were not the same as in France, and there was none that could be recommended in Kirkton. There was a good one some twenty kilometres to the north, but that would not be convenient, and in any case it was an expensive place. The suggestion was to

use Mrs Ramsay's offer, which was briefly described. They could count on getting a good breakfast, either a simple one as in France, or a more substantial one if they preferred.

There was a fairly good restaurant in the town, even if its food and wine were not up to French expectations, but in any case they would be taking some meals with the Andersons, or in Edinburgh or other places. If they chose sometimes to take a picnic, the best thing would be to get Mrs Ramsay to prepare what they needed, which was a common arrangement. There were no taxis in Kirkton, but there was one man who had a large car licensed for hire, and he could meet their train, and if they wanted, take them for one or more day trips.

This reply set things in motion, and the visitors arrived by an early evening train the day after we got back from Argyll. Soon after we heard them arrive, my mother and I went round to Mrs Ramsay's to greet them, and to make sure they found everything satisfactory, which they assured us they certainly did. They knew who we were, and even appeared to have been told about my attachment to John, no doubt as something mildly amusing.

My mother reminded them that, as she had written to say, she had planned a very simple meal for them at our house, and that the Andersons would be coming round a little later. When they all met up, it was my turn to be amused, especially by the exuberance with which Pauline and Ann embraced each other, and the rather stately way in which

Robert greeted the two boys. John, as usual, was making sure that this great social occasion went well, and in particular that I was not left out, as the one new addition to the children's group.

Meanwhile, his father was using his similar gifts to charm Mme Desmoulins, and as a sort of by-product, her husband. He told them what a huge difference Robert's initiative had made to his own children's visit to France, and how he was particularly pleased to see how well Pauline got on with Ann. He hoped they would get as much out of their visit to Scotland. He had always been interested in the old French connection, and was now a full-blown Francophile. He only wished his French was as good as her English. And so on.

What were their plans for the next day? They must be tired from their long journey. He knew how it felt, from having done it himself only last year. Both he and my father would be at work, but he was sure their wives could organize a restful day in one or even both of the family gardens, and they could have a look around the little town. Unfortunately, there wasn't much to see in Kirkton. If they were interested in textiles, Mr Stewart was the man to ask about them. My father overheard this remark, and said, for them all to hear, that he would be very pleased to show them around his warehouse. He couldn't sell them anything, as he dealt only in bolts of cloth for the wholesale trade, but at least they could get a better idea of what to look for in the shops, if they wanted something to take home.

Mrs Anderson said they had been fairly sure that no major excursion would be planned for the following day, so she hoped the visitors would come for lunch at her house. I would also be there and that would make the party up to twelve, which was about the most she could cope with for a proper meal. My mother joined in to say that she would be pleased if they came to our house in the evening for another simple meal, which would put off their first encounter with our not very good restaurant. Then they might work out some tentative plan for day trips by train, bus or hired car. My father said that if they were not too tired it would be as good a day as any to come and see his textiles. It was just a short walk to what had been a “green field” site, on the edge of the town. I could come with them to show them the way.

Mrs Anderson was a very good cook and was particularly set on showing the French visitors that we had at least some of the world’s best raw materials, so she gave them a sample: Scotch broth, Aberdeen-Angus beef, strawberries and cream. She explained that some of our best fish dishes were usually served at what was really our main meal, high tea, and she would see how they liked that some other day. It would be much more different to French food than our lunch had been.

I took them to the warehouse in the late afternoon. It was in fact the first time I had had the full showroom treatment myself, and I was most impressed. So, I think, was John, who had somehow contrived to be included in the party.

There were a few “shop window” mannequins dressed to show off one or other of the main kinds of material, and there were a great many samples, most of them small squares just big enough to represent the whole pattern of the cloth, but also some bigger ones that were in fact remnants that my father’s travellers had recovered for him from their shopkeeper customers.

A small part was made up of imports, mainly of silks, and these were quickly passed over as of relatively less interest to people coming from France. There were also some specimens of Yorkshire tweeds, and even a few from Ireland – famous, my father said, for their resistance to thorny bushes and other rough treatment. The main emphasis, however, was on Scottish Border and Harris tweeds, and finally there was a large collection of tartans, and a notice on the wall which said that if the one you wanted was not here it could be specially ordered. Or you could commission a new design. “Even a Lesage or a Desmoulins one?” they asked, and were assured that nothing was impossible, but that it could be very expensive!

My father told them about the tweeds, and the origin of their name as a misreading of “tweel” (twill). As to the tartans, he was anxious to debunk some of the myths that circulated about them, and also to point out that there was nothing at all to prevent Pauline, for example, from wearing a skirt – but not a male kilt, if you please – of the Royal Stewart pattern, whose bright reds, he thought, would suit her very well. He told them which of the Edinburgh shops he thought were best if they did decide to take any such



thing home with them, admitting that the ones he recommended were his own customers but, he said, none the worse for that.

They came to our place, as arranged, for some supper. My mother said she had heard that they had been given a Scottish lunch, and she didn't see much point in giving them her version of French food, so she had made spaghetti bolognese – which she thought the children at least would like, and this went down well. She also produced a *fiasco* of Chianti, and explained that in Scotland we didn't have wine with our meals very often, but that she had had this in her store for some time, and their visit was a good time to bring it out. It did not occur to her to offer any to the children, watered down or not, but after the meal she gave them mugs of cocoa, which I had every evening, like so many of my generation, and they seemed to like it.

After the distribution of cocoa, Mme Desmoulins remarked that she saw we had a piano, and asked who played it. “Me”, I said, “but I’ve only been learning for less than a year”. My mother coaxed me to play a simple little piece I had been practising, and then Mme Desmoulins asked if she could have a turn. She not only played, but sang to us, in a fine voice, a number of the old French popular songs. I remember one in particular, “*Ma Normandie*”, which has been one of my favourites ever since, and I have even got John to add it to his repertoire.

They decided that the next day they would take a train to Edinburgh, and my mother said that if they liked, she would

go along and help them to deal with getting around on the city trams and buses, and take them to a good restaurant. This time at least the Anderson children and I would not go with them, but perhaps on some subsequent visit one or more of us would go instead of any of our parents.

During their stay they went to Edinburgh four times altogether. It was Mr Anderson who recommended them to do a few things they might well not have thought of. First on his list was the Royal Botanic Garden. "Never mind the botany", he said, "just have a look at it as a beautiful garden, and make sure you see the view to the south, with its silhouette of the old town's skyline". He also recommended climbing to the top of Arthur's Seat, combining it with their visit to Holyroodhouse. And similarly, he said, try the camera obscura when you go to the castle. It will intrigue the children, and probably amuse the adults too. John and Jim added their own bit for Robert's benefit, and advised him to get his parents to have a look into their favourite shop in Princes Street for games and toys, saying that they doubted if Paris itself had one anywhere near as good.

Mr Anderson in the end took only one day off work, for what he thought of as a very particular visit, to Falkland. He had found out how it could be done by bus, so that all three Anderson children could come along, as well as me. He told them that the Palace there, built by Mary Stuart's father, James V, was one of the few things that survived from Renaissance times in Scotland. James had died there just a few days after Mary was born in Linlithgow. It couldn't begin to compare, of course, with Fontainebleau,

but it had a certain charm in its own small way. It was unusual in having preserved its “real” tennis court. The little town – hardly more than a village – was also a good place to see houses and cottages built in the old Scottish style, with pantile roofs and “corbie steps” on the gable walls. Because it was a place that attracted tourists, it also had a better restaurant than most places of its size.

The buses were even more convenient for some of their other visits. They were disappointed to find that one of the “Marie Stuart” sites, Loch Leven Castle, could only be visited on one day each year, which did not fall within their holiday period, but they did manage to get to Linlithgow, and to Stirling castle.

They hired the car for just one day, as they thought they must see at least a little of the Highlands, and my mother, the only real highlander among us, worked out a route for them that took in a long stretch of the Tay, including Killiekrankie, Loch Tay, and views of Ben Lawers and other peaks, emerging into the Lowlands again at Callander. She thought they could get a good lunch at a hotel near Killin. They said when they got back that one thing that would bring them to Scotland again was the Highland scenery, but my mother told them that what they had seen was nothing, compared with Argyll, which was where they should aim for next time. And my father of course put in a word for Galloway.

We had them to several more family meals – the two families said they could easily take turns in providing simple

hospitality. Jim's birthday fell on the first Sunday they were there, and as the weather was good it was celebrated by a tea-time party in the garden, with his favourite chocolate cake. The guests were not forewarned that it was a birthday, for fear that they would go out and buy expensive presents, as we knew foreigners, and even English people, often did. Alex and his sister were not invited, as the party was so big already. They would have to come some other time, and at least, both must join in at Hallowe'en. Supper, later on, was just Mrs Anderson's home-made tomato soup – she said the secret ingredient was a few cloves.

Other meals included high teas in both houses. On one occasion the main cooked dish was Arbroath smokies, and on another it was kippers from Newhaven, both of which were pronounced good. And they tried oatcakes with heather honey from the comb, which for some reason Robert said he liked the best of all his new gustatory experiences. We had a lunch party on their last Saturday, again on the Andersons' lawn, and were lucky once more with the weather.

They had decided to take a train from Kirkton that connected with the Edinburgh to London overnight one, and go straight on to Paris on the Sunday. "Rather than me", said Mr Anderson, but they sent us a good report on how easy it had been.

It was sometime after the war that Robert and Pauline entertained us with their reminiscences of their Scottish holiday. The good bits, surprisingly, included most of what

they had had to eat, although they did say they had had one or two very bad restaurant meals. They hadn't even tried eating fried food for breakfast, but had accepted Mrs Ramsay's suggestion of doing what she did herself, starting with a small bowl of real oatmeal porridge, and topping up with some of the excellent bakeries that in those days were delivered, fresh from the oven, in time for breakfast. They thought (as we did too) that French bread and croissants were best, but that those now forgotten Scottish specialities were nearly as good. They praised Mrs Ramsay, and they said her picnics, ordered a day in advance, had been proper meals. They had liked Edinburgh, not only for its site and its history. They said the shopkeepers, tram conductors, and just about everybody they had spoken to, had been extraordinarily friendly and helpful, even if it had sometimes been very difficult to understand what they were saying. The camera obscura had obviously impressed the children as much as anything else.

As to what they hadn't liked, the first item must really have come from their parents' comments. It was about attitudes to alcohol – on the one hand wine was only an occasional luxury, and on the other hand they had had several encounters with drunks, something fairly rare in France. Their own adults had been a great deal too keen on their cultural and educational sightseeing – they would have preferred to spend more time with Jim, John, Ann, and me. We knew what they meant.

# At the Academy

**J**OHN AND ALISON now joined Jim at the secondary school, Kirkton Academy, which was “grant-aided” so that it only charged quite modest fees, and many of its pupils were excused even these. It had a good reputation, and prided itself on having standards at least as high as those of equivalent schools in the big cities. Like all but a very few Scottish schools, it had always taken both boys and girls. As Jim had done before them, both John and Alison enrolled in the Latin class, which meant – wrong-headedly, Mr Anderson thought – that they missed out on “technical” subjects like woodwork for the boys, or domestic science for the girls. But clearly something had to be forgone, and when challenged he had no other suggestions, being equally opposed to dropping music, for example (mainly singing) or art (mainly drawing), or even gymnastics.

They soon renewed contact with Miss Scott, who found time at the end of the day to look out for them, just to say she hoped they had had a good holiday and, in response to their polite questions, that she thought she had made a good beginning in Florence. She would miss their Friday evenings, but neither they nor she would have the time for such extras, and in any case it would have been difficult to devise a good follow-up to their previous year. She hoped she could make British history interesting for them; they would be making a start the next day.

Out of all their new teachers, Alison said she liked their English master best. This was probably because she had been able to give all the right answers when he tried to find out what his class had already read. John said he thought mathematics was going to be interesting. The teacher was a youngish woman who, he said, was good at making the beginnings of geometry and algebra clear.

They had deliberated beforehand on the obvious question – would they continue to sit together? – and had concluded that to begin with, at least, they wouldn't. It might be easy enough to do so later, as there were no fixed places when they moved from one classroom to another. But it would draw unwanted attention, and in any case it would be a good idea if each of them tried to make friends with others of their own sex. About half of the pupils were from their Kirkton elementary school, and the others were new to them, coming in by bus, or in a few cases by train, from villages in the Academy's catchment area.

Games were compulsory on Saturday mornings throughout the autumn and winter terms. Jim was doing well at Rugby. It was the game favoured by schools of this kind, although in this part of the country it had very little adult support – the great popular game was soccer. Alison turned out to be an above-average hockey player, and was soon taking part in matches with other schools. She said she liked the exercise, and being part of a team, and didn't mind the occasional small bruise. John, however, turned out to have little aptitude for Rugby. It was not that he wasn't strong and fit enough, but he just couldn't master the skills required in kicking the oval ball, or even in catching it when it was

passed to him. So he was to find himself in one of the lower grade teams all through his time at school. And he knew from his attempts to play soccer with other boys, not under school auspices, that he couldn't really blame the shape of the ball. When the summer term came round they had various options. These did not include cricket, in which hardly anybody in Kirkton had any interest. He took up tennis, largely to please Alison. When they played against each other, she won embarrassingly often, but they discovered that they made a strong team for mixed doubles, and sought out other pairs to play against.

In the Christmas holiday at the end of 1937 Ann was very keen to go to a pantomime, as they had "always" done. Her father, for once, could not be persuaded by her pleas. Her mother didn't really want to go either. She discovered, however, that she had an ally in Alison, who had still never been to a theatre at all. John wasn't really at all keen, as he had not enjoyed the 1936 performance, but couldn't bear the thought of Alison going and not him. Mr and Mrs Stewart both said they hadn't been to a pantomime since away before the war, and were willing to take the two younger Andersons as well as Alison. They made bookings for the first evening in the holidays, and took an early afternoon train to Edinburgh, where they did some Christmas shopping, had high tea in a place they liked, before the theatre, and came home at what for Ann especially was a very late hour. She was tired but happy and said she couldn't understand people who didn't like pantomimes.

The two families saw a lot of each other over Christmas and New Year, and the four children were nearly always to



be found in the same place, even although the two boys and the two girls had different amusements most of the time.

Then one Saturday in March, it was arranged that John and Ann would sleep at the Stewarts' house, while Jim went with his parents to Edinburgh, to see a performance of *Hamlet*. His father had said that if you didn't know anything about the theatre you might as well start at the top and, as he had managed to find out, this was the play that Jim would be studying at school when he got into the upper section of it in his next year. He was able to congratulate himself on the result, because Jim was enthralled, and said afterwards that it had been far better than he had expected.

Easter, as usual, was the crucial time for gardening, and was almost an exact repeat of the previous year. Then the summer holidays were approaching. The Anderson children claimed that there had been a near promise that they would go back to France, with mention of Versailles and a beach in Brittany. John said it would be much better if they could include Alison and, with transparent disingenuousness, that she would be another girl to keep Ann company. Their father reminded their mother that he had said that the educational commentary on Versailles would be up to her. He didn't even like the place much. She said, how would it be if they had most of the holiday in Brittany, and somehow just worked in a one-day excursion to Versailles? This had instant support from the children. She then slightly spoiled things for them, however, by saying that they might also take in a visit to Chartres "or somewhere", on their travels. They got out the Michelin map of France to see what that involved.

**Pillow talk**

*I don't know why we're so late in our planning.*

*Well, anyway, I don't think we need quite so much preliminary research this time. But we had better get down to looking up the Michelin guide very soon.*

*I didn't get much out of the onion man. He said he didn't know anything about hotels, and not much about beaches either, except that there are plenty of them in Brittany. It's the kind of answer you often get from local residents.*

*It would seem odd to go to France without contacting the Desmoulins and the Lesages.*

*Yes, I've been wondering about that. I think I'll write and suggest at least a lunch together in Paris.*

*That's as good as forcing them to offer us some hospitality.*

*I wouldn't go that far, but it wouldn't bother me if it did – we did plenty for them last summer.*

*Write anyway. You can say it will be about the beginning of July, I think. Keep it vague, and they may come up with some idea themselves.*

## Maternal wisdom

WHEN I LOOK back on it, I tend to see my life as a series of jumps. The first was the move to Kirkton, that brought me John, and the next was the move to secondary school. That, and the next one again, to college, appeared at the time as stages in liberation. They each brought more freedom from parental control. But I had an unusual mother, who had ideas ahead of her time. They came partly from her having been thrown into nursing at the deep end, dealing with young men, most of them from the working class, whose bodies, and in many cases their minds, had been badly damaged by the war. She had been impressed, she once said, by how ignorant they all were about elementary reproductive physiology.

She had had a talk with John's mother, and I can imagine more or less how their conversation must have gone. John and I were clearly not like other children of our age, who for the most part avoided others of the opposite sex like the plague, unless they happened to be siblings, and sometimes even then. Watching us together was all very jolly, and quite amusing at times, and would be all right up to the age of puberty, which wasn't far off. But what happened then? She asked Mrs Anderson if she would agree to her

proposed move. Soon after we started at the Academy, John came home with me one afternoon, and she announced, with a casualness that didn't quite ring true, that she had been speaking to John's Mum, and that they had agreed that she, as an ex-nurse, should give us some supplementary teaching, about human biology. If John and I agreed, she would start the next day, after tea, at which he was welcome to join us, as always.

She began with what she said was a necessary preliminary. Ordinary bits of the body, she said, might have a whole string of different names, like "posterior", "bottom", "bum", "buttocks" (or "butt"), "backside", or "arse". She herself took the line that she would not use words like the last one, if the people she was with would be offended, but that she really had nothing against it, or other words like it. As an army nurse she had heard them all, and they never did *her* any harm. When talking seriously about body parts the polite thing was to refer to them by their scientific or medical names, and that was what she would do. For instance, she would be surprised if we didn't both know what a boy's "cock" was, but she would call it the "penis". This all sounded so sensible that I don't think I even blushed, but John looked a bit surprised.

As far as she knew, school science was no better than when she was a girl, and there was nothing like enough biology in it, hardly any zoology, and nothing at all about human beings. There was some talk these days about sex education, but such ideas didn't seem to have been heard of in Kirkton.

Now, John and I had set our parents a rather unusual extra problem, and they had decided that something had to be done about it. We had got together at a very early age, and we spent all our free time together. We obviously liked each other a lot. Although it was unusual, there was nothing wrong with that, in fact all our relations liked to see how well we got on together. But nature would take its course, and almost any time now we would reach “puberty” and change from being children to being adults, physically at least. If we didn’t know what it was all about, we could find ourselves in trouble.

In her day, some parents did try to tell their children about such things, while others left them to find out from older children. Probably we had already heard some of the things boys and girls talked about, and for all she knew we might even have discussed them between ourselves. But she had come across some adults, especially women of her own age, who were extraordinarily ignorant. She was lucky, because you could hardly be expected to become a nurse unless you had some proper scientific education in these matters, and that was why John’s mother had agreed that it should be her that took on this job.

Mrs Anderson had been surprised that she had decided to teach us together, but she said she thought that this would be a good move. It would help us to realize that this was ordinary science, and not some secret lore that boys and girls shouldn’t share together. Her lessons would come in two parts, the straightforward biological facts, and then the

more difficult part, how best to deal with sex in our modern civilized society.

She then went on to explain first how most living things are made up of cells, and then that most kinds, both plants and animals, come in two sexes, male and female. Plants commonly had both sexes in the same individual. Each sex produces some special half cells, that come together to make a new individual, in our case a baby human.

The second lesson dealt with female human anatomy and physiology, how girls were programmed to start releasing ova at monthly intervals, and how their anatomy provided an entry point for the male cells. They had one obvious bodily change at puberty – they grew breasts that were intended for the production of milk. She had got out some of her old textbooks with appropriate illustrations, and she supplemented these with a specimen of a “sanitary pad” and an explanation of its use and disposal. I was not to be alarmed when I found I was passing blood, but just to tell her when it happened. John evidently had known little or nothing of this, and looked on as a very interested spectator. And although I had heard some parts of the story, it certainly straightened things out for me. She said it all stopped by the time women were about fifty, but I could deal with that when the time came. I might hear the stopping time referred to as the “menopause”.

The third lesson did the same for the male. The obvious changes in John’s case would be that his voice would “break” and become distinctly male, and that he would grow

more hair on his face. If he thought, or even dreamt of sex he might find that his penis got bigger and stood out rigidly. This is called an “erection”. He might then shoot out some semen, the slightly gooey fluid that carries the spermatozoa (“sperm”), the male equivalent of ova, but produced in very large numbers. This is called an “ejaculation”. Some night he might wake up to find that his pyjamas were in a bit of a mess. He would have had a “wet dream”. It was an unprovoked discharge of his semen, and he would go on having them at unpredictable intervals until he started having sex, or masturbated – about which she would have more to say next time. Whenever it caught him unawares he should just wash his pyjamas under the tap, put them in the laundry basket, and clean himself up. There was no male equivalent of a sanitary pad ! Jim must have been through all this, and maybe it was partly why he had been so keen on having his own bedroom. Big brothers were notoriously bad at passing on tips gained from their own experience. And fathers were no better. Nearly all of this was news to me, and I am sure John had had only a confused and inadequate idea of what he had to expect.

The fourth and last, rather longer session was, in effect, Part 2. Mum started by saying that this was one aspect of life where the “back to nature” idea did not help. Few people wanted to get back to where evolution had taken us, and live like the chimpanzees, our nearest “natural” cousins. If it became general for young teenagers to have sex as soon as they felt the urge, we just couldn’t have the sort of civilized life we had come to value.

It was easy to prevent sexual activity from producing babies, although the available methods were not 100% certain. It was called contraception, and some religions, including Roman Catholicism, were against it, although many Catholics broke the church's rules. She herself saw nothing wrong with contraception. It did not destroy life, but just stopped a new one from beginning. The most effective method was the use of a condom, and she showed us one. Children often at least heard of their existence, under the name "French letter" from the little envelopes they were sold in. It was said that their widespread use in France for about a century had had a great effect in slowing the rise of the population. They were also used to stop the spread of what were called "venereal diseases".

The other way of preventing unwanted babies coming into the world was called "abortion". This meant killing the baby before it was born, and she thought the religious objections to it were much more justifiable. There were sometimes good medical reasons for abortion, but it seemed to her to be too close to simple murder, when it was used on a healthy young woman and a healthy embryo, for so-called "social" reasons, such as its mother and father not being married.

There were some substitutes for ordinary sex with your own acknowledged partner. One, that applied mainly to men, was prostitution – paying a woman to have sex with her. Many people in the world claimed to see nothing wrong with it, but in her view it was evil, in the same category as



slavery, treating a human as an object to be bought and sold – and sometimes it actually was simple slavery.

There was also the whole question of homosexuality, having some sort of substitute relationship with someone else of the same sex as yourself. Fortunately, perhaps, this seemed to have no application to the present case, so she wouldn't discuss it with us. No doubt we would hear enough about it elsewhere, later in our lives.

Masturbation seemed to do no harm. For anyone trained in medicine, this was one reason for questioning the common sense of the Boy Scout movement, which warned boys against it! There was a whole folklore about all the terrible things that would happen to those who practised it, but none of this had any basis in fact. So if John wanted to avoid wet dreams, it was the recommended solution. Some women also practised masturbation, using various ways of simulating real sex. She never had, but saw no reason to advise other women or girls against it.

If you only looked at the physiology, you might ask why people couldn't begin to have a sex life immediately on reaching puberty. But there were in fact some very good reasons for not doing so. There was always the risk of "accidental" pregnancies, and it really didn't seem a good idea even to take a chance on having a baby in the third year of secondary school, for example. More importantly, it seemed a much better idea to delay having sex until you were older, and better able to cope with the whole relationship of which it was a part.

Lastly, there was the moral issue, which was the concern of religion. Our one, and most others, was against sex outside marriage, and you couldn't get married at age twelve, or even fourteen. Some people almost seemed to think that this was the only part of "morality" that mattered. But even if you didn't go as far as that, or even if you didn't believe in a religion at all, something like our usual idea of a stable family seemed a good idea, as part of civilized life. Our own two families, the Andersons and the Stewarts of Kirkton, were setting good examples, so far at least!

What did all this mean for John and me? Mum said: "All four of your parents would certainly give you the same advice, and we've seen enough of the world to know what we are talking about. No sex, until you are old enough to commit yourselves to a long married life. It will often be very difficult. If you find yourselves alone together in the right sort of place at the right sort of time, or if perhaps you've had a glass of wine too many, you will be sorely tempted. Take my word for it, it will pay you to resist. And try your best just to be a bit like brother and sister, and don't stir things up".

All these years later, I think she was right, and am glad that we listened to what she said and followed her advice. It wasn't always easy to do so! Maybe we were just the lucky ones who by some fluke found the right partners early in life. And we were lucky in having such a mother as mine.

## Back to France

ONE MORNING, at the very beginning of the summer term, Mr Anderson sat down to breakfast with a big smile on his face, and said he had a new surprise for them. He and Mum had decided to buy a car. It would have to be a fairly big “family” one, and so he had decided to get a Vauxhall. It would be quite expensive, and there would be the added cost of a garage, with a new big gate and a short drive. There was just room for it on one side of the house, and for a new path to the back door on the other side. But he had done his calculations as a good banker, and they could afford it all, without any of the “buy now, pay later” business that so many of his customers were letting themselves in for. He had learned to drive in the army, and he thought he could easily enough pass the test and get a licence. Mum should take proper driving lessons. It was becoming quite a joke that teaching your own wife was a first step towards divorce.

Having created the desired sensation, he followed it up immediately by saying: "And that's not all. We have decided to go to France by car. We reckon it will take two days to get to the Channel, and the same to get back, and that we can have a week at a beach in Brittany and then a few days touring around, including, if possible, meeting up with our French friends. The only bookings we should need are for a hotel in Brittany and for the ferries. I am posting off letters about these this morning. Mum has written to Mme Lesage and Mme Desmoulins, with the dates I am requesting, and asking for any suggestions they might have. But she has made it clear that we don't intend to stay more than one night in any one place after we leave Brittany. All that part of France between Brittany and Paris (or Fontainebleau if you like) is full of interesting things to see, and we'll be free to stop wherever we want to.

All the holiday resort places will be full, but I think we'll find hotels easily enough in some quieter towns or villages. It should be the same in England. We'll be avoiding London, and taking a longer crossing, direct to Cherbourg. And back the same way. In England you'll have fairly long days on the road, but in France we'll keep them short. It's all a bit ambitious, and it will cost a lot, whatever we do, so you'll have to be content with picnics more or less every day, and the hotels we look for will have to be about the same as the Fontainebleau one, or even cheaper. We'll ask the Stewarts today if they will let Alison come, always supposing she wants to. There should be room for the four of you in the back seat, and you can take turns as to who sits next the windows. And in the hotels you can have one girls' and one boys' room".

A letter came back from Mme Lesage, saying she had spoken to her sister-in-law, and making the kind of response that the Andersons had been at least half expecting, while trying to persuade themselves they weren't actually asking for it. She remembered very well that lunch party the Andersons had so kindly provided for them in Fontainebleau, and could they repeat the same thing in the same place? The Desmoulins children would be staying with them at the time, and their parents would come out from Paris for the Sunday. She would arrange everything, and it would be a joint invitation from her husband and her, and the Desmoulins.

The rest of the school year passed uneventfully. Jim obtained his Lower Leaving Certificate, which in the ordinary course of events would be superseded by the Higher one in three years time, and Alison and John did well in their end-of-year tests. Miss Scott had seen their results, and commented that they were about equally good overall, but that their best subjects were already showing different patterns. Alison was doing well in English, French, Latin and History, while John had excelled in Maths and Science. Miss Scott remarked that, whatever explanations people tried to find for it, this was the usual difference between the sexes, although she had known some notable exceptions. Come to think of it, their English and Maths teachers were the other way round.

The car duly arrived, and Mr Anderson succeeded in getting his licence by taking one lesson to bring him up to date on the traffic regulations, and being tested in the instructor's car. So he was able to take the family for an

outing that very weekend. Mrs Anderson began to take lessons, but said she would complete the course when they got back from France, and that on the journey she would act as “pilot”, in charge of maps and guide books, and would try to find the best road from Kirkton to Southampton, and pick a place to stop overnight, about half way. She would try to locate a second hotel from the AA book, from which they could easily reach the morning ferry.

She did all this with the greatest efficiency, and even found good places just off the main roads where they could picnic, and a place to stop where there would be shops to top up their second day’s picnic supplies. They reached the ferry quay in good time and had a fairly calm sea for the crossing. Jim had been given a pill to take, which effectively prevented any *mal de mer*. They had a café lunch in Cherbourg.

Mr Anderson had been worried about driving on the right, but soon found that it presented no special difficulty, and they reached their hotel in mid afternoon. It was a lot newer than the one in Fontainebleau, but almost equally friendly, and with only a quiet road to cross to get to a vast stretch of sandy beach. The weather was good on every day but one, when the sky was overcast and there were a few showers. At breakfast, when it was already obvious that it was not going to be a very good day, Mr Anderson suggested they might have a break from making sand-castles, and take the car to Mont St. Michel, which was far away from the route he was thinking of taking to get them to Fontainebleau and back to Cherbourg. On the little island they climbed all the way to the church at the top, noting that by doing so they were in a tiny minority in the large number of summer

visitors. On the way down they went into a *crêperie* with some hesitation, as it was so crowded, but found it was geared to mass production, and they got what they wanted quite quickly. They found its products surprisingly good.

They had left home on a Thursday so that they could get to their Brittany hotel on the Saturday, and were to book out on the following one. Mr Anderson explained his plan, which was to have one more long day of driving, so as to get to a place within reach of Fontainebleau in time for their Sunday lunch. He had asked Mme Lesage to find out if their old hotel could put them up for just one night. This would allow him to enjoy the lunchtime wine, and even have what he called a “post-prandial nap”, and they could leave on the Monday morning for a leisurely drive westwards to catch the ferry that was booked for Friday morning.

They had a magnificent luncheon, which all of them were to recall frequently in the dark days that lay ahead. By some sort of mutual consent the adults said their farewells immediately after it, but Jim addressed himself to the other five children, and proposed a walk in the forest. They went far enough to let Alison see the place where they had had their first picnic under the ancient oak tree. John tried to give her some idea of what a huge and beautiful forest it was.

Their four days took in visits to Versailles, Chartres, Falaise, and Bayeux, the last of which probably left the most lasting impression, of the famous “tapestry”. Mrs Anderson proved adept at finding convenient small hotels from her Michelin guide, wherever it was convenient to stop for the night, ending at Cherbourg. In three of them, by timing their arrival fairly early in the late afternoon, they succeeded in

getting three double rooms, but the fourth one was a very old-fashioned place, interesting in itself, where they had to take two rooms, each for three, so they split up differently, with one for the males and one for the females.

From Southampton she tried to take a slightly different road home from the one they had come south by, but in fact much of it was the same, except that they did it in one shorter and one longer stage. Ann said that in any case it all looked different when you were travelling in the opposite direction. Maybe they should see more of England next year? Mrs Anderson said that she had been wondering when someone would think of that.

**Pillow talk**

*It's strange how you have a great holiday, and then you always think how nice it is to be back home.*

*You've certainly made it a good one to come back to.*

*I prefer to think it's been a cooperative effort. Even the children do their bit pretty well.*

*Including our fourth acquisition. What do you really make of this set-up?*

*I just think that some people are different from the average, whatever that is, and that we seem to have nothing to worry about with these two. Mary*



*says she could hardly believe how sensible they were when she gave them their sex-education classes.*

*It's always Jim that my thoughts come back to.*

*One day I got him on his own, and he said that this sort of holiday and this sort of family life were what he liked, and it was all far better than the Scouts.*

*I think that's partly just him trying to make the best of things. He was really upset by it all.*

*Maybe so, but I think he has taken a dislike to anything remotely militaristic, with fancy uniforms, drills, inspections and all the rest of it.*

*And that makes me wonder where the country is heading. I think big trouble is on the way.*

*At least Jim likes his Rugby uniform, and gets on well with the rest of the team.*

*I hope you know the reputation Rugby players have for beer drinking.*

*There could be worse things, if it doesn't go too far.*

## John's mother

I REALLY had come to look upon Mrs Anderson as my second mother. But I had also come to realize that in fact I knew very little about her. My own mother was the only one who used her Christian name, which was Jean. To her own children and to her husband (at least when there was anyone else around) she was "Mum", but to me she was Mrs Anderson – in fact right up to the time I presented her with her first grandchild, when she became "Granny". I knew the main facts of my own parents' origins and their early lives. And I knew that Mr Anderson had been born and brought up in Kirkton, that he had been just over eighteen in August 1914, had left the Academy with a good certificate, immediately volunteered for the army as a gunner, and risen to the rank of sergeant. Ever since he had been demobilized he had worked for the same bank, rising to be its Kirkton branch manager.

One Saturday morning in the autumn I went over to the Andersons' and found that the children had gone out together to do the household shopping. They might have waited for me, I thought, but to be fair, I hadn't said I would be there that early in the day. Anyway, Mrs Anderson said I should come and give her a hand in the kitchen until they returned. As she was in the middle of a big jam making session there was plenty to do. It seemed natural to ask, where had she learned to do all these things? She hesitated a little, and then said it had been mainly from the family cook. Her mother could hardly boil an egg. It was often the case that the generations of girls alternated – the mother was very interested in cooking and the daughter wasn't, and then the granddaughter took it up. In fact she had her grandmother's own recipe book – she could show it to me sometime.

It was, of course, the words "family cook" that caught my attention, and it was probably what had been behind her hesitancy. I asked her about it, hoping I wouldn't get into trouble for my inquisitiveness.

"Yes", she said, "we never talk about it much. It's all a bit sad. Both my parents were killed in a train crash just before the war. We had always thought of ourselves as being quite rich people, by Kirkton standards anyway, but when my brother and I had sorted out our affairs we found that we had been left with only a very small amount of money. He was only one year older than me, and had finished at the Academy in 1913. He was supposed to be

starting a training in the law, but hadn't got very far. When war broke out he was another, like your father (I should say, both your fathers!) who volunteered immediately. In his case, however, they gave him a commission as a second lieutenant in the infantry, which was much the same as a death sentence, and he was killed in France early in 1915".

"So when the war began, I was left on my own, with a school certificate, but no further education or training, and hardly any money. I was already James's best friend". I reflected that I was getting a lot for just helping with the jam making. This was the first time it had come to light that, as was common, Jim, as the eldest son, had been given his father's name. She continued: "Different couples made different decisions but, maybe because we were still so young, we decided neither to be formally engaged nor married. We wrote to each other all through the war, and he spent his home leaves with me. That didn't make his parents very happy, but he said he had to get his priorities right. And yes, I might as well be honest, we did sleep together. I had heard somewhere, and it seemed to make perfect sense, that this was the least a woman could do for a man who was risking his life at war. But we were careful that I shouldn't get pregnant".

"But what were you actually doing?", I asked, "And anyway, where were you living?". Another of her hesitations. "That", she said, "is where I got into this incurable habit of not talking. My mother was a great linguist, and she herself

had taught me some French, rather more German, and even a bit of Italian. I've never been to Italy, and doubt if I could speak it much now. In the pre-war years, however, we had had many visits to Germany, so that I had become a fluent speaker, and I could read the language as easily as I read English. I had also taken it as a 'higher' subject at school, and of course got the top grade in the exam".

"It didn't take much imagination to see that this was my one asset. I asked an old friend of my father's, who had some good contacts, what I should do, and he said: 'Get on the next train to London! I'll give you a letter of introduction, which you must deliver in person'. People talk about the inefficiency of the civil service, but there was no red tape involved in my appointment, and I was soon at a desk as a full-time translator, in a special unit that had been set up near a small place to the south of London, in Surrey. I was given a typewriter and had to learn quickly how to use it with two fingers, but I discovered that evening classes were available in the town, and I learned touch typing – which is still just about my only accomplishment, apart from cooking and translating.

Please don't talk about it. It needn't be much of a secret now, but I am sure there is another war coming with Germany, and as I'm still young enough, I can probably take up where I left off, back down south, and that would have to be kept a close secret. I'm already making inquiries, and I think they are biting at the offer of someone with experience, and a bit older, presumed to be generally more responsible".

This of course set my thoughts racing, and one of the first came as the question: "But what will we all do without you?" "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it", she said. "It's not yet absolutely sure that there will be a war at all, although I am certain enough, and we don't know when it will start. But when it does, the first thing you'll discover, as James would say, is that you have to get your priorities right. And don't forget, our two families are very close, and we should be able to work things out together. So we may actually be luckier than many, who will find their lives torn apart.

At this point, the others returned with their shopping. John said I shouldn't lie so long in bed on Saturday mornings, but his mother defended me by saying I was far more help in the house than he was. I had been given a lot to think about. One small point, that I overlooked at the time, was that Mrs Anderson was the only one in our two families who had experience of life in the south of England, and she had been there for four whole years.

## Rumours of War

FROM THAT SUMMER of 1938 onwards, much of the apparatus of government, and a rapidly growing proportion of the public, began to act on the supposition that a new war was becoming increasingly likely. By no means everyone was taken in by the scenes so many of them watched on the news films at the cinema, with Chamberlain waving his bit of paper and talking of “peace in our time”. There were a few, like Mrs Anderson, who quietly but intelligently followed events in Europe, and who were still in touch, to a greater or lesser extent, with well informed sources. The turning point, of course, was the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the subsequent guarantee given to Poland. There must have been a substantial number of people who knew that they only had to wait for it to be put into effect.

It was assumed that air-raid shelters were not needed in a small and unimportant place like Kirkton. The main war preparations were in fact going on quietly without many people being aware of them. An assessment was being made of how many evacuees the town could take, and arrangements put in place for their reception.

Those who had become pacifists as a rational response to the First War, and particularly those who had tried to bring their children up in the belief that *all* wars were bad, were in a quandary. The great majority, persuaded eventually that the accounts of Nazi thuggery and Hitler's madness were true, reluctantly had to agree that there must be something in the idea of a just war, and sombrely began to prepare for one. Not at all like the last time, said the older people, who remembered how the outbreak of war had produced scenes of wild enthusiasm.

Some started to ask themselves, what would war mean for them and their families? The Andersons and the Stewarts began with the simple arithmetic. The last war had lasted four years. In four years from now, Jim would be eighteen, so that it seemed likely that he would be in the forces. John's case must be somewhere near the same limit. Mr Stewart would certainly be excused from military service, and it seemed unlikely that Mr Anderson would have to join up, or even that he would be accepted if he volunteered. From their memories of "last time" he could look forward to being overworked in an understaffed bank. As for the textile business, it would have to change its stock in trade, but was likely to make a profit by doing so. Mr Stewart, however, had determined that he was not going to be a "profiteer" like those the soldiers despised so much the last time. He discussed it only with his wife, who assured him she too had her memories, and fully agreed with him. He would find some way to help with the war effort efficiently, without accumulating excessive gains, or if need be he would find a good way of disposing of them – there would be no shortage of people in need.



It seemed improbable that Alison or Ann would be affected directly, and in fact when war came they only had to put up with the same side effects that made life a little difficult for everybody. Mrs Anderson was actually the first to go, when she quite suddenly announced, several months before the war started, that she was wanted in London, and would only say she would be getting her old job back after an absence of some twenty years. Her husband and, rather curiously Alison, were the only ones who had much idea of what the job was. Mrs Stewart considered going back to army nursing, but in the event found she had good reasons for staying put in Kirkton. She eventually took up some part-time work at the local cottage hospital, to relieve the staff shortage there, but even that added rather too much to the extra work she had acquired at home.

On top of their own worries, they thought of the people they knew in France. They tried, but failed, to come to any conclusion, other than that if Germany and France were once again at each other's throats, it meant big trouble for ordinary French people.

**Pillow talk**

*At least we have the phone now.*

*Yes, we'll have to fix a regular time once a week. I wish it could be once a day – or rather once a night – but these trunk calls are not cheap.*

*I've got the beginnings of an idea for following you down to London.*

*You mustn't say that.*

*What mustn't I say?*

*"Down to London". The English all say "up".*

*But I'm not English.*

*"When in Rome ..."*

*You seem to have got me there already. But it really is just an idea.*

*I hope you're not proposing to bring our children to be bombed.*

*No, that's the key to my scheme. I want to dump them on Mary.*

*Does she know anything about this?*

*No, but she soon will. We're all to go there for tea tomorrow evening, while you'll be finding somewhere to sleep in London.*

*I'll be phoning anyway, but I'll put off my call till about ten o'clock, and you can tell me more.*

*Now, do try to get some sleep. I'll wake you early and take you to the station.*

*Take special care of Jim. He needs it most.*

*I suppose my priorities are all wrong, but my top one is to try to keep you and me together this time.*

## Lives reorganized

AS ARRANGED, the Anderson children and their father came to tea with us on the day Mrs Anderson left for London. Mr Anderson had evidently decided that he might as well say what he had to say with all of the children present – after all they would be affected more than anybody. He began by explaining, or perhaps rather by *not* explaining, why his wife had gone. He just said she was taking up where she had left off twenty years ago, and that she was a great one for doing her duty. The fact that she and others like her had been called upon was one very small indication that the government was assuming that war would come soon. It was also what his bank was telling him.

He said that he had had a rather wild idea only yesterday, which he hadn't really discussed with anybody, not even his wife. Whether it would work depended mainly on

the Stewarts. He also had to take it up with the bank, but he was fairly confident that they would accept his plan and help to put it into effect. He knew the manager of his bank's London office. He came originally from Edinburgh, and was married with three children, just like him. What he would propose to the bank was a simple exchange. But the point would be to leave the Anderson children in the safety of Kirkton, while the other whole family could move here also. Even he would probably live in relative safety, because Mrs Anderson would be working somewhere outside London and they could share lodgings, from which he could travel in daily.

The outline of an evacuation scheme had already been announced, and in a way it would be like asking the Stewarts to accept his three as evacuees – it might even be an advantage to them to have children they knew, rather than have strangers billeted on them.

If they agreed he would discuss it with his wife – she would be telephoning from London at ten o'clock. Then he would write to Mr Forbes, the London manager. Finally he would ask for an interview at the Edinburgh head office to ask for the exchange to be authorized.

As to some of the practical details, he would offer to let his house to the Forbes family at an advantageous rent. If, as he expected, private cars would largely be taken off the roads, he would either sell his one or set it up on wooden blocks and get the local garage man to put it in the best condition for long-term storage. He would, of course, come

to a suitable financial arrangement for the cost of looking after the children. What did they think? Was it a good idea? Could they, and would they, take in the three children?

I had been seeing a very agreeable prospect unrolling itself, and I was the first to speak up. I said it all sounded just the right thing to do, now that Mrs Anderson had already taken the first step. I would be very pleased to share my room with Ann, and we had the “guest room” for the boys – it had never actually been used since we moved in.

My mother immediately intervened. I don’t think she wanted the discussion to be dominated by the children. She said it would be a big turn-up for them all, but she couldn’t see any real difficulty. My father said it would mean a lot of extra work for her – think of the extra laundry ! – but that we were all old enough to help, and that if we each did our bit it should all be possible. John said he was half a Stewart already, and *he* certainly had no objection. Jim said it was just his luck that he had no sooner got a room of his own than he was going to have to put up with John once again, but he could see that the coming war was going to have worse consequences than that.

The phone call produced nothing new. Mrs Anderson had not of course foreseen much of the detailed planning, but had guessed that some major involvement of the Stewart family must be part of it. She wrote to my mother that very night, to say how grateful and relieved she would be if it all worked out, and that she would count on frank comments if any of it was just too much, or if anything went wrong.

Mr Anderson told us at our next get-together that he had taken great care over his letter to Mr Forbes. He was, after all, proposing to swap his very ordinary semi-rural post for the prestigious London one. The bank only really maintained a branch there for prestige and publicity; nearly all its real activity was confined to Scotland. But in fact he got an immediate reply to say that his scheme had come like an answer to prayer. Mr Forbes said that his wife had already been at him about the likelihood that London would be the first target for German bombs, and they thought this was an ideal solution from their point of view.

He was more worried by the effect it might all have on the Andersons. But he said this, of course, largely in ignorance both of Mrs Anderson's imperative call to duty, and of the unusually close friendship they had formed with my family. As soon as the bank gave the go-ahead they could get down to practical details like housing. He would probably like to take up the offer of renting the house furnished, and would put his own things in storage. The bank might even be induced to help pay for such arrangements.

Everything fell into place before the 1939 summer holidays began. When Chamberlain at last addressed the country on the BBC on the third of September we were all in the positions that most of us would occupy for the next six years. And our little group of teenagers had grown by three: Elizabeth, Marjory and Alastair Forbes. Their ages were one step ahead of the Andersons, with Elizabeth about two years older than Jim. His siblings and I began

to speculate on how he would get on with the two girls, and to which he would give preference. In fact the three of them occasionally spent time together, but nothing remotely like an ordinary teenage romance ever sprang up. Something else did happen, however, some two years later, which I'll have to come back to.

For our summer holiday, all of us except Mr and Mrs Anderson had stayed in Kirkton, and we young ones contented ourselves with what we could find to do locally, and with a few day trips to Edinburgh , which none of us knew at all well.

## Getting together

THE WAR BEGAN, as everybody who was there remembers, with an extraordinary false alarm. Not long after Mr Chamberlain's announcement, the air-raid sirens went off all over the country. It was perhaps particularly bizarre in places like Kirkton, which had no air-raid shelters. What were they supposed to do? Hide under the table? So far as is known, nobody did. But for the Anderson children it provoked the obvious question – was there a real alarm somewhere else, like London? Their hosts, the Stewarts, were if anything even more concerned for their friends, whom they could imagine as being in all sorts of mortal danger. But, they recalled, it was a Sunday, so the Anderson parents would be together, and they had already moved out to lodgings near the same establishment in rural Surrey, where Mrs Anderson had been in the last war, and which had been refurbished and set in motion again. So they were probably all right, and very likely they would telephone later – the lines must be exceptionally busy. It was Mrs Anderson who did so, and she said that where they



were there wasn't even a siren within hearing distance, although they had heard all about that on the wireless. The people in Kirkton were not to worry. The official information was that raids were to be expected mainly at night, when they would normally both be out in the country.

How were things at the Stewarts' house? It was Mrs Stewart who had answered the phone, and she laughed. She told her friend to try to imagine a fairly small house that had had four adults and eight teenagers in it most of the day. They had listened to the radio in the forenoon, decided the siren just couldn't be serious, and had had a sort of buffet lunch. All the children were being remarkably helpful and getting along well. The others mocked the Forbes ones for their southern speech, but the teasing was taken in good part, and reciprocated. Yes, it *was* eight now, as the Forbes had acquired one evacuee. She would write a letter soon, if she ever had a quiet few minutes.

The evacuees had arrived on the first of September. Although this part of the country had always thought of itself as being in the hinterland of Edinburgh, it received its evacuees from Glasgow, as there were far more of them. The special trains had been filled with children, no parents, and only a minimal number of adults to look after them. Those sent to Kirkton had been taken to the elementary school, which was used as a reception centre. The people in charge had to decide who should be asked, or if need be, required, to take them in. Small groups were formed and taken to the houses which had been listed as having room for one, two, three, or occasionally more, keeping the families together. Because of the number of children already present

– three of whom could almost be classed as evacuees – the Stewart house did not have to take any, and the Forbes were told they would be allocated just one. In fact they had a spare bedroom, because the two girls had decided they liked Jim’s attic room, and shared it, Alastair had taken John’s, and Ann’s old room was free. As far as possible those in charge were trying to match up the evacuees with the children already present, so they found a single boy about the same age as Alastair. He became known to everybody simply as “George”.

Finding room for him was the least of their problems. George was desperately missing his mother. Mrs Forbes first tried to enlist the help of Alastair, and she herself did everything she could, but in the end it was Elizabeth, with some help from Marjory, who persuaded him to cheer up a bit, eat some lunch and drink a glass of milk. They helped him to unpack and put away his very small collection of clothes. He had no toys or games with him, but he had brought the latest issues of some of the popular “comics” - *Hotspur*, *Wizard*, and *Rover*, which he said his mother had bought specially for him to take. They provided him with paper and pencil and got him to write a short letter to her to say he had arrived safely and that he was with a family called Forbes. Mrs Forbes added a note to say that George was missing her, but she thought he would be all right, and Alastair was sent to post it straight away to the address that the authorities had provided.

George obviously came from a poor home. He seemed healthy enough, but he was considerably smaller than Alastair, who was almost his twin in age. He was neatly

dressed and clean, although his clothes, and especially his shoes, were in a poor state. One of the few things he had brought with him was a toothbrush, but no towel; Mrs Forbes thought that was fair enough. He spoke to them in “school” English – afterwards there were many stories of other Glasgow children who had been quite unintelligible. The letter that came back from his mother explained the apparent anomalies. George, she said, was an only child and his father had died young, soon after George was born. She herself had not been well for the last year or so, and hadn’t been able to go on working. So she apologized for sending him off so ill equipped. Now she was a bit better, and without George to look after she could probably manage to do some light work. There were plenty of jobs available, because of the war. She hoped to have set aside some money soon to pay for her fare to Kirkton to visit George. She thanked them for taking him in, and hoped he was not causing them too much trouble. She would write to him at least once a week and it would be very kind if they could persuade him to write back.

Alastair had in fact been going through a spurt in his growth, and they had a heap of clothes that were too small for him, but at least as good as the ones George had arrived in, so he was presented with them, with the explanation that it would make the laundry easier if he had enough changes. They included two pairs of pyjamas. He had come without any, and they surmised that he had been used to sleeping in his daytime underwear.

Slowly, he seemed to appreciate that he had landed lucky, and that realization, together with his mother’s parting

exhortations, made him an unusually well behaved teenager. Mr Forbes said the *only* one. His bed was always made up and his room was always neat and tidy and clean. And he took his share of the usual household chores. A paragon of virtue, except that he was addicted to any kind of snacks he could get at, and the biscuit jar was not safe. Elizabeth was deputed to speak to him about it, and he eased up until he was no worse than Alastair. The two boys gradually became good friends, and began to spend most of their free time together, in and out of each other's rooms. They were in the same class at school, along with Alison and John, at the start of the second year at the Academy. Provisionally at least, fees for George and many other evacuees had been waived.

George's mother – she signed her letters Isabel Morriston – was soon able to report that she had found work, at the information desk of one of the big shops, which she said, exactly suited her, as it was seldom busy and there was nothing like heavy lifting required. She said that she would soon be able to afford a trip to Kirkton, but it was difficult to see how she could get time off. It might even be into January before she could get a long weekend.

It was not long before the evacuees started to drift home, but there was no suggestion that George might do so. Mrs Forbes said there was an element of economics involved. It must have made life much easier for his mother. That same day she had a letter from Mrs Morriston that frankly admitted that this was the case. It said that if George's presence was a major trouble to them she would somehow take him back. She had never asked for charity in all these

years since his father died, but if the present arrangement could be continued it would make a tremendous difference for both her and George, and who knows, it might yet save him if there were an air raid on Glasgow.

That evening Mrs Forbes showed the letter to her husband and they discussed it. He said: "We're not doing so well on faith and hope these days, but I would like to cling to charity. It's an unfortunate word, and I think we need a different translation, maybe something like 'caring'. We really ought to do far more than we do. In the meantime it seems a very small thing to keep George with us – 'for the duration' if need be. The allowance the government pays goes a long way to removing any financial burden, and already I hardly think of him as a stranger. He's quite an asset to the house". Mrs Forbes passed her husband's very words on to Mrs Morriston and added that when a long weekend did become possible it would be easy for George to move in with Alastair for a few nights – they had a camp bed for him – and she could have George's room.

Hallowe'en of 1939 was to be the last that was celebrated by the Anderson children – in the Stewarts' house – in full style, at least as far as apples and nuts and party food were concerned, and in fact it never amounted to much until the next generation of children demanded its revival years later. At Christmas Alison and Mrs Forbes worked together to have a family carol concert. Hogmanay was subdued.

Food rationing slowly began to affect the shops and their customers. What was most trying was the black-out, which seemed to make the winter weather just that little bit more dreary. No one in the three families in Kirkton was

conscripted or “directed” in any way, but they were making their calculations as to when each of the older children would be eighteen, the boys especially.

Mrs Morriston did manage to get two days off towards the end of January, for an extended weekend. Mrs Forbes told the other children that they should leave George alone with her as much as possible, and that probably what she would really be needing was a good rest. This was obviously true when she arrived, more than normally tired out by the journey from Glasgow, which involved changing trains in Edinburgh, but was not an excessively long one.

She did not look well, but did not go into medical details beyond saying she was anaemic and that the doctor had prescribed eating liver – but that was easier said than done, these days. John was somewhere within earshot, and was asked to go and see what the family butcher could do. He got them what was wanted, to the surprise of no one except Mrs Morriston. “I wish I had you to do my shopping in Glasgow, she said”. After lunch, which included the liver, lightly cooked, as instructed by her doctor, she spent much of the afternoon with George in what was normally his room, but after that she was more often to be found with Mrs Forbes, trying with some success to be helpful around the house. Before she left she was looking a great deal better and more cheerful. They said she must come as often as she could, and in fact she did so every few months, until she eventually moved to Kirkton herself.

Mr and Mrs Anderson said they would have liked very much to have come on a visit at Christmas or New Year, but that it really wouldn’t have made much sense. The trains

were overcrowded, it could only have been for a very short time, and what they really needed was some relaxation in their quiet corner of Surrey. Both had been working hard. He especially had found that managing the bank's London branch was no longer a sinecure. The movement of Scotsmen – and a growing number of women – in the forces had given him a lot of extra work to sort out their accounts, in their suddenly changed circumstances, and there was a flood of government regulations to keep up with. They would try to get time off sometime in the spring.

Jim and the two Forbes girls attended first-aid classes organized by the St Andrew's Ambulance Association. They said the Academy was reorganizing its curriculum in the upper school. Elizabeth would be completing her secondary school education that year, after a normal six years, and was having to work hard to make the change-over from the English to the Scottish system. Because of the staff shortages, Jim and Marjory, now just starting in the upper section, would be encouraged to take the final exams a year early, after a course more concentrated on the actual subjects that they were going to be examined in. They would have no art, music or gymnastics, and would have heavy loads of homework. Saturday morning games would continue, but there wouldn't always be a teacher available to accompany every team to every match. John decided to wriggle out of them as much as possible. By government decree every school was obliged to provide school lunches, on payment except to those who couldn't afford the charges, and it was recommended that children should accept these meals, as they would help to make the rations go further at home.

The two mothers in Kirkton agreed with each other that the best thing they could do was to take over all the house management themselves, without their usual hired help, but getting the children to do specific jobs. School homework had priority, with some check that it was genuine, and that it actually got done. Sundays were days off, both for household jobs, as far as possible, and for school homework. Church was voluntary, and in fact was becoming increasingly unpopular. Any kind of recreation was OK, but long country walks were especially encouraged whenever the weather was reasonably good.

The children moved freely from one house to the other, and formed their own smaller groups. Alison and John were nearly always together, often with Ann, and sometimes with Alistair and George. The two older Forbes girls tended to keep themselves to themselves, and that, unfortunately, left Jim on his own. Occasionally he would spend some time at Alex's house, and he was supposed to be on friendly terms with Alex's sister Jenny. Mrs Stewart rightly suspected, however, that there wasn't much to it, and that it was just Alex that he remained friendly with.



**Pillow talk**

*I'm tired.*

*Me too. Bank work was never meant to be like this.*

*You have all this travelling to do as well.*

*That's no great hardship so far. At least I usually get a seat on the train. But the railways are bound to get worse. I hate to think of what bombing may yet do, and not only to local transport.*

*It's no use saying "I miss my children". There's a war on, and so far we're among the luckier ones.*

*Meantime they seem to be enjoying things. When all of them get together it must be like one of the old Victorian families.*

*Jim is the problem case, and I think it's almost certain now that he will be in the army before all this is over.*

## For the duration

FROM MY VANTAGE point I could now look around and see where the rest of our three families (plus George) had got to. For my own part, I felt a very deep contentment in just being with John every day, and I know that he felt the same, even although, at the same time, he was greatly missing his mother and father.

Soon after the war started we had had some news from both Galloway and Argyll. The older of my Stewart cousins had joined the Wrens, and the younger one was working in the family shop, not sure of how she should become involved in the war effort. My Campbell grandmother wrote regularly to my mother, and gave the news, with no details and no comments, that all four of my Glasgow cousins were in the forces. She said my grandfather was “failing”, and she would probably have to get some one in soon to help look after him. Neither of them thought he should try to get into an old people’s home. She wanted us to come at Easter.

School went on more or less normally, although a few of the younger men teachers had already gone off to the forces, and two of the older ones, who had retired at the end of the previous year, had come back to help out. Miss Scott was working full time. She told John and me that she was doing her best to finish off her thesis in her spare time, but it was becoming difficult to get into Edinburgh when she would like to look things up in the libraries she used there. Her final visit to Italy had not been as pleasant an experience as her earlier ones. It had left her, she said, a confirmed anti-fascist.

The Forbes family and their evacuee joined up with the Stewart/Anderson one for many purposes, but most particularly when we had some music. I could now provide a piano accompaniment to the songs we wanted to sing. It was Mrs Forbes who suggested that we put a bit of order and method into it, by practising Christmas carols and, she said, she knew enough about it to supervise our weekly sessions. "I know some of you lot are having religious doubts", she said one Saturday when they all assembled around my piano, "but just to please me, make a little concert of carols for Christmas Eve. They include some of the best songs for young voices, and I'm sure you'll enjoy singing them". That Christmas Eve is deeply embedded in my old memories, and has left me with a slightly odd favourite, *In the deep mid-winter*, which can always be relied on to bring the occasion back to mind. By this time we all had the elements of French, so we included *Il est né, le divin enfant*, in the original, and did our best

with *Stille Nacht* and *Tannenbaum*, with some coaching from Mrs Forbes, who turned out to have a fair knowledge of German. We even sang *Adeste fideles* in the Latin.

It was Mrs Forbes, in fact, who became my main supporter in everything to do with music. She was very anxious to get her own two girls interested again, after earlier trials that had somehow fizzled out. They had sold their own piano rather than put it into storage with the rest of their furniture, but she said she would get them recorders and would try to persuade my teacher to give them lessons if they wanted to try again, and this was soon arranged, as the teacher had lost some of her students to the war's demands. She proved herself very clever at raising and maintaining enthusiasm, and later on Elizabeth took up the clarinet and Marjory the flute. We had less success with the boys, but at least all of them joined in the singing, to good effect.

At Easter in 1940 my mother decided to take me to Argyll for a week. We took John too – it seemed the natural thing to do. But we left Ann in Kirkton, because my mother thought it would be better for her to spend more time with her “best friend” Maggie, than to make the wearisome wartime journey for a short visit to two very old people. Our journeys to Argyll and back did take a long time, but we managed somehow, on trains and buses. As Mum had anticipated, it was the last time I saw my grandfather Campbell, and I don't think he really knew who I was. He died only about a month later, and my mother went back

alone for his funeral and to try to sort things out with my grandmother. The government was proposing to requisition the Argyll house, and we were going to have to take my grandmother into our one. She thought it was in connection with some sort of army training camp that was being set up nearby.

It was while my mother was away, I remember, that John and I had one long discussion, sitting out in the garden, where for once we had been left on our own. Rather remarkably, it settled one important matter for us for the rest of our lives. As usual it was he who took the initiative. "Alison", he began, which warned me that something was coming, "are you really a Christian?". I tried to find the right answer. My own thoughts had been turned to this question by our Christmas carols, Easter, the death of my grandfather, the war in general, scraps of adult conversation I had picked up – a whole environment in which I think any intelligent child could hardly avoid thinking about such things as "belief".

I said I had certainly decided that there were many things in the Bible which were not true. Also, I had seen a leaflet defending Roman Catholicism that used the word "literally", and I said that seemed quite nonsensical, when applied to things like the "real presence" – which had been mentioned at school in a lesson about the Reformation. I had asked one of the evacuee girls about it, knowing that she was a catholic, and she said her priest had told her to be careful about mere words; "real" for example, did not

mean what it ordinarily did. John said he had heard similar arguments, and was not impressed. If you argued that way you could easily say that “black” sometimes meant “white”.

He said that for his part he had tried to find out what was the real core of Christianity. It was in fact quite clear, and no secret. It was the belief in life after death, which was what the resurrection story was about. Now, he said, he just couldn’t imagine what that could mean. It seemed far more likely that you lived, and eventually died, and that was the end of it. It all seemed like a very clear case of wishful thinking, and nothing more. Certainly, if you based beliefs on evidence, there didn’t seem to be any for this one, that would convince a reasonable person.

I said my own doubts were more to do with the idea of a loving god. By that age I had accumulated a lot of information about our fathers’ war, and realized that it had in any case only been the worst, so far, of many. I said I couldn’t see how a loving, all-powerful god could do the things our Christian one did.

John said he had heard some of the “official” answers, mainly to the effect that we couldn’t hope to understand all of God’s purposes, but he thought that was all very weak.

I asked him if, supposing we decided we weren’t Christians, did we still believe *something*? Some other religion maybe? If not the Christian God, was there any kind of god at all?

He said he had tried to find out just a little about the other great religions, and had discovered that what they

had in common was simply that they demanded that you believe what they told you, which was usually something highly unlikely. That was where it all stopped for him. It was no use telling him he *had to* believe. As far as he was concerned you either believed something or you didn't, and you couldn't do it to order.

What *did* he believe then? He said he had had one idea that seemed to lead somewhere, that in many cases the facts were far more marvellous than the myths. Real human births, for example, were remarkable enough for him, and the "virgin" one was obviously just an old fairy story. He had been following up our biology lessons with reading on his own.

He admitted that one thing stumped him. It was religion that told you what was right and what was wrong. But even there the Christians didn't seem obviously better than anybody else, and plenty of people had noticed that both parties in the last war had claimed to be Christian, and to have God on their side. And pre-Christian people had had their own rules, which didn't seem to have been all that different. The whole question interested him a lot, he said, and he would go on looking into it. He did too!

So what do we do now? I asked. Do we sing carols next year? Do we admire Christian churches, sculptures and paintings, and even Christian literature? Do we have any interest in the history of the Reformation, for example?

This, it became clear, was exactly the point he had been aiming at all along. He said that he had overheard some

of “the parents” once, agreeing that they had become “social Christians” and he thought that was a useful in-between stage. In the long term we could make it clear that we were unbelievers. I noticed the plural, but then we very often used it, both of us. We could then claim, very reasonably, that we regarded the whole matter of religion as a big thing in our history and one that had had all sorts of consequences. “Remember Brunelleschi’s dome!” he said. And if we liked making, listening to or singing good music, we needn’t worry too much about the literal meaning of the words. In later life he told people that he didn’t like the word “atheist”, and preferred “sceptic” to the more popular “agnostic”. I think this began when he added David Hume to his list of heroes.



# The real war begins

**L**ARGE NUMBERS of British troops – poorly equipped, the history books tell us – had been sent to France, but there had been very little fighting. And then by April of 1940 things began to move. The Germans were to take over Norway, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as much (and eventually all) of France. Rather than attack the “impenetrable” Maginot Line, about which there had been so much propaganda, they fought their main battle to the north and west of it, and drove the Allied army to Dunkirk, turned south and defeated the remainder of the French one, accepted the French surrender, and began to prepare for the invasion of Britain.

The attention of the general public was fixed on Dunkirk, and they accepted the official view that a miraculous evacuation had been made, without fully understanding how much equipment had been lost. And of course large numbers of men had been killed or captured. The French defeat was a great shock, and in Scotland there was distress about what had happened to our old ally. Then the news was suddenly full of the London blitz. One odd feature of it all was that hardly anybody even thought about the possibility that the Germans were going to win the war. Churchill made his great speeches, and eventually was able to credit the “Few” with having prevented an invasion. The bombing of London and other cities went on.

The thoughts of the Kirkton families were of course mainly for Mr Anderson. At first he was able, most days, to get away to his rural retreat before the sirens went off, but on some mornings only managed to get in to town with considerable difficulty and delay, and he once found that a bomb had landed near enough to his bank to cause minor damage to it.

Then he was called on to do his share of fire-watching, which meant that he had to stay in London overnight, twice a week. He was given a camp-bed to sleep on in the office premises that occupied the top floor of the bank building, but had to go out on to the flat roof when the sirens went off. He had a stirrup-pump, and buckets of water and of sand were placed at convenient points. He told the family long afterwards that he had had a few hair-raising moments, but that what he remembered mostly was how cold it had been when winter came on, and how long the nights had seemed, even when the scene, mainly to the east of him, had been at its most spectacular. He had done nothing at all heroic, he said, and merely being bombed was nothing new to him. The real heroes were the ambulance drivers, the fire-fighters, and the rescue teams who were in the thick of it all. His main trouble all during the blitz had been sheer exhaustion, induced by sleepless nights, increasing travel difficulties, and a heavy work load at his bank. He had managed to confine his fire-watching to weekdays. Then, as he put it, he had just “flopped” at weekends in order to recover.

The Andersons, among them, had kept up a fairly frequent correspondence with their French friends. At the beginning

of the war their news had been reassuring. All of them, like the Andersons themselves, were either too young or too old to be called up. They did worry a little about Robert, who might reach call-up age before the war was over. And of course “like everybody” they had friends and relations who had gone off to the forces.

When the defeat came, it was all very sudden, and there were no letters. The Andersons took some comfort from the thought that there had apparently been no bombing or fighting that would have affected either Paris or Fontainebleau. It was not until late in the war, after the liberation of Paris, that they had a letter from Mme Desmoulins assuring them that her family and the Lesages were all safe and well. They had been unable to find any method of sending news. She said they had had an unheroic war. They had neither collaborated nor joined the maquis, but had decided just to put up with the occupation as best they could. As she pointed out, this was what the great majority of French people had done, and there had been a good case for doing so. It had not been at all pleasant living under Nazi rule. She would welcome news of all the people they knew in Scotland, and hoped it would not be too long until the war was over and they could all meet up again. When this letter came, Mr Anderson said he thought their friends had acted reasonably. The other option had been the heroic one, and it had no doubt helped, especially during the allied advance across the country, but it had also led to terrible retribution being inflicted on innocent people. In France it was probably good enough if you could truly claim not to have been an active collaborator.

**Pillow talk**

*Do you think we're going to survive?*

*If you mean us two, yes, if we're reasonably lucky.  
If you mean the country, then yes, of course.*

*What's going to happen next?*

*That's something my job does tell me something  
about, but I can't pass on the slightest hint, even to  
you.*

*I just hope all your fellow workers follow the rules  
like you do.*

*I hope so too. London must be looking terrible, I  
suppose.*

*I haven't seen the worst of it. What I see from the  
roof is mostly in the East End, and I never go there.*

*When can we go north? My supervisor says I'm  
entitled to leave, and I can get a week off any time.*

*The bank is finding it hard enough to keep up  
with the work even when I'm there, so I must take  
only a few days. And maybe not till the August  
holiday.*

*Make it a week.*

## Grandmother Campbell

THINGS LIKE requisitionings usually happened very quickly, and we soon got the news that my grandmother was having to vacate her house. She had agreed to it being “let furnished”, as it were, to the army, and she and her housekeeper were very busy with men sent by a firm in Oban, packing up all her linen, tableware, kitchen equipment, books, etc, for storage, and making an inventory of all the furniture. But, she said, who knows what will there really be to come back to, after the war?

This time it was my father who went off to Argyll to help ensure that everything had been done as best it could be, and that all the papers were in order. Somehow, at considerable expense, he persuaded the local hired-car man to use some of his small supply of petrol to bring them across country to Kirkton, with much more luggage than one old lady would normally take around with her. The army had already started to move in, and the young officer who was arranging things said not to worry about the cats and dogs. Soldiers liked having animals about, he said, and

all she had to worry about was that they would be spoiled rotten. He himself undertook to look after them until things settled down.

Once again it was Mrs Ramsay next door who provided a solution to our accommodation problem. My mother had worked it out that she just couldn't provide any more space in our house, if we were all to live in reasonable comfort. She had been on very good terms with our neighbour, ever since she had encouraged the start up of the bed-and-breakfast business, and she had been able to direct many of the business men who came to the textile warehouse to use Mrs Ramsay's facilities, rather than stay in the rather grim commercial hotels.

So now, when she asked for help, she had a very favourable response. She only needed sleeping accommodation, she said, and quite a small room would do. Through the day her mother would spend all her time with the family. Not an ideal arrangement, but to use the phrase that now covered everything, there was a war on. Mrs Ramsay said it would suit her very well to let us have one of her rooms. As things were going now, her accommodation was hardly ever all taken at the same time, and even if she just charged a very small amount, it would make a useful and regular addition to her income.

I was not in on the conversations my mother had with her at the time, but I learned afterwards that my grandmother had explained that she and my grandfather had made "mutual" wills, so that all the property of whoever died first

would go to the other one. She had had her lawyer out from Oban to make a new one for her, leaving everything to my mother. My mother raised the question of her brothers in Glagow, saying she thought they had been hardly done by when her father had made his *inter vivos* settlements, but she was told firmly not to concern herself with that matter. The old lady said that the Glasgow families were well enough off, and her will was in line with her husband's intentions. The ultimate beneficiary would be me, Alison, and good luck to *her*. The sons had not even turned up for their father's funeral.

Had my mother heard, by the way, that one of her nephews had been reported missing at Dunkirk? They now had news through the Red Cross that he was a POW in Germany. She had not heard, but she hoped he would be all right. As far as her mother knew, the other three were all in the army in England.

And so we settled down to a slightly different daily routine. My grandmother had always been amused by my special relationship with John, and now he soon became a favourite with her. Sometimes I suspected him of just using her to give his charm some extra practice, but that was probably unfair. The truth was that he loved a story, and she was always ready to oblige, with tales of her youth, partly in Glasgow, but more importantly, in the west Highlands in the good old days. And he was ready to pay for this benefit by being always at her beck and call. However, he was developing a capacity for mimicry, and

now he would imitate her soft Highland voice very exactly, with: "John, I wonder if you could do a little thing for me ... ", followed by some small but tiresome request, usually to do some shopping.

John's parents did come for a whole week, between the school summer holidays and the Christmas of 1940. They used the Forbes's attic bedroom, while George moved in again with Alastair, and Marjory took his room. I noted that Ann clung to her father. He listened with endless patience to her chatter, mostly about her friend Maggie, and their move to the Academy, and how awful school dinners were, and how they had a nice old English teacher (I think she was actually about fifty!) who was married and had children of her own, but had come back to help out. Before they left again for London he told Mr Forbes that this break had been exactly what he needed, to forget the overwork and the nightmare of the blitz. Jim talked more to his mother, although afterwards she said she hadn't got much out of him, except that the only good thing at school was Rugby. As for my Jo (as I thought of him, although I never said the word out loud) I remember mainly that he confided in me one day that he didn't think he needed a mother and father as much as his siblings did. He meant that he had me instead, but that was something that he hadn't really needed to tell me. And I had him.



## Another new alliance

ELIZABETH FORBES finished her secondary schooling in the summer of 1940, just after her eighteenth birthday. It was the last class that was run on the old system that made it the “Sixth Year”. Afterwards, as a wartime measure, the majority of pupils were encouraged to take their “Highers” exam in the fifth year. A few did stay on for six years, but with the extra year being patched up as best it could be done, in very small classes, or even with some of them given individual tuition, so that they could get higher level passes in the more difficult and time consuming subjects, like languages or history. Marjory, Jim, and his friend Alex were going into what would now be, for the rest of the war, the usual final year, aiming at taking the exam in 1941, when all three would be seventeen.

Then there was a whole contingent of four all in the same class, Alison, John, Alastair and George, entering the third year, and lastly there was Ann, who was beginning at the Academy, along with her friend Maggie Macleod, who had come to be one of the gang.

The most immediate question was, what would Elizabeth do? There was as yet no conscription for women, so she was free to choose. Some of the other girls were volunteering for the women's services, including nursing, and a few for the Land Army, working on farms or in forestry. Her father asked around and was able to assure her that none of these patriotic options seemed particularly short of recruits, and he and her mother, to their great relief, succeeded in persuading her to be one of those who were maintaining normal life, or some semblance of it, at the universities. Kirkton was within easy enough reach of all four Scottish ones, so she opted for Edinburgh on the grounds that although her father had not gone to university, he came from that city, and she had relations who lived there, including an uncle and aunt with whom she could stay. She had no difficulty in finding a place in the Faculty of Arts, and thought that eventually she would most likely become an elementary-school teacher. At least she liked children. Her mother accompanied her there and saw to it that she was properly kitted out, in time to start on the traditional second Tuesday in October. She could do some voluntary war work in her spare time.

After she had obtained her first-aid certificate she had made some further connection to the St Andrew's Association, and she registered her presence, and availability, in Edinburgh. Quite soon she was asked if she would like to assist at a centre for convalescent war-wounded that had been set up in one of the city's many Victorian mansions. The work required no real nursing skills, but was mainly to see that the patients got some extra attention, even just someone to push their wheel chairs.

Most of them had been wounded at Dunkirk, and the majority were Scottish, sent to Edinburgh to be near their families. One ward, however, had collected up what their nurses called the “waifs and strays”, not British but mostly French, with a few Poles and others. They had all been declared unfit for further military service, and nobody seemed clear about what was to happen to them when they left the centre, and had no homes to go to.

They could never decide afterwards if the elderly middle-aged Edinburgh lady in charge had been a deliberate match-maker, or if it had just been the luck of the draw, but Elizabeth was asked to interest herself particularly in a young Frenchman who was nearing the end of his rehabilitation. His extensive injuries had led to the amputation of his left foot, and he was waiting to be fitted with an artificial one. He could get around on crutches, but spent most of the day in a wheel chair.

Elizabeth had above-average schoolgirl French, but she found that this was not called into play. Her patient introduced himself politely as Philippe Dumont, in clear English, even if it retained something of the attractive accent which hardly any native French speaker ever loses. She in turn said he could call her “Elizabeth” as she was not a nurse, but was there just to help him get around, to take him along to the improvised gym for his daily exercises, and do anything else she could to facilitate his full recovery. She had her university classes to attend, but was always free in the evenings and at weekends, and could work out a schedule of attendances earlier in the day, most days. She lived with her aunt and uncle just ten minutes walk away, and the central

part of the university, the “New” College, was just another ten minutes beyond that.

He had just finished his studies at the Sorbonne, he said, when war was declared, and he was called up. She worked it out that that meant he was about four or five years older than she was, as indeed his appearance would suggest. He had been studying English, and had had a long visit to Scotland before the war, which was why he had asked to be sent there when his main hospital treatment was over. The answer had been something like “We have to send you somewhere, and Paris is closed for the duration, so why not Edinburgh, if that’s what you want”, and they sent him north with the next batch of returning Scotsmen. He said he had always found the Scottish people more *sympathique* than the English. This was music to the ears of Elizabeth, who had long felt that her father’s exile in the south had deprived her of her birthright. But then he said: “Oh, I’m sorry, I was forgetting that you are English”. “No, I’m certainly not”, she replied, and explained to him why she had a southern accent.

Having got this sorted out, they soon found themselves chatting away, they said later, as if they had known each other all their lives. She said that she supposed the big question for him was what was to happen next. Yes, he said, but he had learned, if nothing else, to take life as it came along. The French Consul was being very helpful, and thought Philippe should be able to find work easily enough, in a school or perhaps a university, where he could make use of his language ability and qualifications. The Consul had also suggested that the army might still want to employ

him, but he had said that would be the last item on his list of choices. He had had his quota of army life in those awful last few weeks at Dunkirk, and would prefer to forget them if he could.

This led to Elizabeth making an appointment for him one day in late October, when she had a whole afternoon free. It was sunny, but cold – typical Edinburgh, she said. She made sure that he was warmly wrapped in his army great-coat, which he had somehow managed to hold on to, and he got into his wheel chair, for a pleasant walk through the Meadows to the University. After he had explained his present status, it was suggested that they might be able to offer him a post as a “research assistant” while he pursued some studies for a higher degree. He said yes, he could even think of a subject, or at least a general field of study that he had been interested in when he was an undergraduate: the influence of French writers on English ones in the nineteenth century. They gave him forms to fill in, and said they would see what could be done, but that it seemed a promising idea.

Then instead of taking him straight back to the convalescent centre, she took him to meet her aunt. Her uncle was out at work and not expected back until late because, like everybody else, he was having to put in a lot of overtime. Philippe turned his Gallic charm on her aunt, and he himself did most of the explaining. If this scheme they had been looking into came off, he would have to find some student accommodation. That will be no problem, she told him, many of the old student landladies had nobody at all now. She promised to help in any way she could.

In the evening, she waited just long enough to get a slightly cheaper call to Kirkton, and then had a rather excited talk with her sister: “Elizabeth”, she announced, “is in love”. Which was true, although nobody had said so. Mrs Forbes’ response, however, was down to earth, mainly to say: “I hope it doesn’t interfere with her studies”. This made her informant pause briefly before replying that she didn’t think it would, as the young man was also going to be studying, and she explained as best she could what was going on. Mrs Forbes said she would have a day in Edinburgh as soon as possible, to satisfy her curiosity, if nothing else.

It took about six weeks to complete all the arrangements. Philippe’s foot had arrived and he was walking on it, rather unsteadily, and still partly dependent on his wheel chair. He had been accepted as a BA student. The British government had a grant scheme for just such cases as his, and he could get a little additional income from private tuition. The convalescent centre said he was free to go, but should come back for check-ups. So he should look for accommodation elsewhere. Elizabeth told him his next suggestion was typically French, and that her aunt wouldn’t even dream of having an unmarried couple sharing a room in *her* house. “What about a married one, then?”, he asked. Her thoughts raced. She had dreamt of a more romantic proposal. She wondered if the French custom was to say no at the first asking. But then she remembered the humorous line of her favourite Burns song:

*The deuce gae wi’ him to believe me!*

and thought she’d better not risk it. With great apparent simplicity then, she said that there was nothing she would

like better, and she thought that in these times they might be able to do it. They agreed that there would be no deception, and they really would live apart until they were man and wife. The centre very obligingly agreed that Philippe could stay on there until they were married.

She told him that she had really given up on religion, but that her mother was still active in her church, and her father at least kept up appearances. She wasn't a *militant* atheist, she said, and to keep her mother happy she would agree to a religious wedding. He had already told her a little about his background, and had mentioned that his own immediate family was a minor branch of a well known protestant one in France, but that, like her, he had lapsed. He too, he said, was more than willing to keep her mother happy – he had met her and they had got on well. Elizabeth explained that in Kirkton – which she said was really just an overgrown village – it was quite usual to get married by the minister, not in the church but in your own house.

So just after Easter, the Anderson-Stewart-Forbes gang had their first wedding. It got everybody together – for the last time, as it turned out. Mr and Mrs Anderson once more made the wearisome train journey, and stayed for a whole week – they said it just wasn't worth all the trouble for a shorter time. Philippe produced his own best man – another Frenchman in a wheel chair, of whom Elizabeth had been vaguely aware, but who had always kept in the background when she went to see Philippe at their convalescent place. Marjory, Alison and Ann were all bridesmaids, and great efforts were made to have them suitably dressed, in clothes that could be used afterwards. The best man had to have

the custom of the “poor oot” explained to him, and a collection of “copper” pennies was made for him to scatter at the front gate. He put a great effort into his short speech in English. His little joke was that the bridegroom had had to settle for a best man who was missing a whole leg, while he himself, the groom, was only one foot short.

Everybody who spoke to Philippe said the same thing: what a great pity it was that his own people couldn’t be at his wedding. In fact, his parents knew nothing about it until after the liberation, although they had been given a Red Cross message that their son was alive, and had been wounded, but was recovering.

Even Elizabeth was thinking about France, not only what a shame it was that none of Philippe’s family could be at the wedding, but also that she had always thought that France was where you went for your honeymoon, and she couldn’t. They had a sort of token weekend in the well known hotel not far to the north of Kirkton, and promised themselves a really major exploration of France after the war. They didn’t have to decide now, but most likely, they both thought, they would prefer to live in Philippe’s country.



### **Pillow talk**

*I really enjoyed that wedding. The sad thing, as everybody said, was that Philippe's family weren't there.*

*Yes. For once, I felt sure that it was a good match.*

*A "good match" indeed. I don't think Elizabeth really knows what she has caught, but I've done a little nosying around among my banking friends, and it seems the Dumonts are out of the top drawer – the protestant one anyway.*

*As always, it's that boy Jim who is on my mind. I tried to speak to him as much as possible, but it's not easy. He says he's getting advice from the school about how to fill in the time until he is called up, and he'll let us know what he decides to do.*

## Business, not as usual

THE TWO Stewart businesses were affected in quite different ways by the war. The old family shop could only foresee ever increasing difficulty, as it became harder to replenish its stocks, not only of clothing and furnishing materials, but also of “haberdashery”, much of which was imported. The wholesale trade, on the contrary, had a key position in helping to organize the flow of materials needed for uniforms and other wartime demands.

The two brothers had foreseen what was coming, and they knew as well as anybody what had happened in the previous war, although the family had not been in the wholesale trade at that time. Just after the worthless agreement at Munich they and their father had had a conference of their own. My father could see that he stood to gain a lot by just letting things take their course, but he had strong principles, and explained to the other two that, whatever happened, our little family in Kirkton had no need to worry about money. In the long term, they only had me to think of, and I was being very well provided for by my mother's

family. So his idea was, in effect, fair shares for all, and the obvious solution was to form a limited company that would own both the shop and the wholesale warehouse, in which my grandfather and his two sons would have equal shares, it being understood that eventually my grandfather's part would pass, in equal allocations, to his sons. Beyond protesting politely that this was too generous, the other two had nothing against this scheme, and so it was put into effect.

A professional Director was appointed to manage the financial affairs of the company, with his office in Edinburgh, and the actual business was done by my father and my uncle. My uncle stocked up the shop as well as he could, but even before the war began, he was having difficulty in finding the kind of goods his customers would be wanting.

My father simply accepted that his peacetime business would have to be run down, and he put all his efforts into establishing connections with the appropriate basic manufacturers on the one hand, and with the garment makers on the other, entering into what seemed like the most enormous deals, to form part of the supply network needed to meet the demands of army, navy, air force, hospitals, factories and mines. He more than doubled his warehouse space by acquiring and renovating what had once been a textile mill in Kirkton, but had become semi-derelict; he managed to get the necessary building permits because it counted as war work. Soon he needed help, and his brother agreed to leave the running of the shop to his wife and my younger cousin, while he took over most of the

work that required travelling – most of it into the north of England, and occasionally to London, from his base in Galloway. My uncle said my father was the brains and he was the legs, which was much too modest of him, but had some truth in it. The Director reported that, although huge sums were flowing out as well as in, the company's bottom line was very decidedly in the black, and the auditors agreed. He advised putting the surplus into safe securities, foreseeing correctly that after the war all this effort would have to be largely closed down and normal business restarted, and that that process would need financing.

I learned about what was happening, because my father insisted that I should try to understand the outlines of it at least, saying that one day I would have to be a business woman myself, and the sooner I got some idea of what it was all about, the better. My mother didn't altogether approve, and would even say "leave the girl in peace to enjoy her music and her books and her tennis and her hockey – the rest will come all too soon", but he insisted that there had to be a balance between work and good living, and that it was never too early to get *that* idea into one's head. I think he was right.

It occurred to me that the only one of my mother's list of my activities that John was very active in was "books". But in reality it all worked very well. He was interested in what I did, and often gave me great encouragement, particularly in everything to do with music. There was something in his idea that I needed an audience, and he did take up

singing, but he was also very good at helping with the practical details, like locating sources of sheet music, or getting repairs done to my equipment. I did try to keep up with his precocious intellectual life, and he did his best to pass on things he thought would interest me, concerning subjects such as the history of music, or its connection with mathematics. Really, though, all that mattered was that we were there for each other. Improbable as it may seem, I don't remember that any really cross word ever passed between us.

This was not because I had an angelic nature. At some level I suppose I resented having Ann around, taking part of John's attention, and on at least one occasion my mother had to intervene when she thought I was being unkind to her. It was something to do with Ann wanting to try piano playing. "Never forget one thing" my mother said – and I really have done my best not to, ever since – "hospitality is one of the most important things in life, even if you *are* half Sassenach, and Ann is a guest in this house". So in fact I had to agree to a shared timetable for the piano, and Ann also began to have lessons. It was at about this time that I began to try other instruments as well as my piano. And in later life Ann was to become my closest friend.

## More departures

IN THEIR LAST term, Jim and Marjory showed some signs of getting together, although those acute observers, Alison and Ann, decided there wasn't much in it. The truth was that Marjory needed a partner for the school dance. If only as captain of the first Rugby team, Jim was worth capturing for the occasion. Both were athletic, and stood out at the practices that were held in the school gym, when they learned the steps of the most popular Scottish country dances. So, having ascertained from Alison that he had not so far asked any one else, *she* asked *him*, and he chivalrously insisted that *he* had been about to ask *her*, but just hadn't got round to it. They even got Alison to play for them, when they put in some extra practice in the Stewart house. "Good, but a bit mechanical", Alison reported to Ann. Jim did all the right things, like escorting Marjory home after their practices, and even taking her to the town's Italian café for hot chocolate and biscuits, that being about all that was now on offer there, on the way. She didn't seem to realize it, but she was as much of a catch as he was, tall and fair, shapely and with lively, attractive features.

When Marjory said she needed a rest at the ball, Jim was quick enough to propose that they should sit out the next dance, and they found a place to do so in the big entrance lobby. He had in fact got something to say, although it may not have been quite what she expected, or even what she had been hoping for. It was evident that he had prepared it in advance. “Marjory”, he said, “we’ve known each other for quite a while now, and I think neither of us has many friends. I have Alex, but he’s not really close, and I don’t suppose we’ll keep up with each other after we leave school. I have no girl friends, although I do like girls, and I’ve always got on with my little sister, and with Alison, well enough. And now I’ve made a decision. I don’t *want* to get too friendly with any girl at this time. I’ll be called up soon, and I intend to get into the army. That means that there is a fairly high chance that I won’t survive, or that I’ll come back as some kind of a wreck. But if you could be a sort of pen-friend, that would be a great comfort. The conditions attached are that you don’t build up any expectations, and that it doesn’t interfere with any other chances that come your way”.

Marjory didn’t say so then, or in fact ever, but her immediate reaction was to think how typically Anderson it all was, at least as far as the male ones were concerned. It was exactly what her father had said of Jim’s father, and she had already thought that she could see it in the way that John had worked out his relationship with Alison. *Rational* – and just about as far from *impulsive* as you could get. Almost inhuman even. But she had to admit to herself, admirable. Mr Anderson’s thinking had hugely benefited the Forbes

family, as well as supporting his own wife. Only time would tell for John. Right now, she had to cope with Jim's version of rational planning. And she had no experience of this kind of situation, either rational or romantic. But she could see that Jim had given her no option. The only thing she could decently do was to say that she would certainly write to him, and try to be a link with home. However, she added that she couldn't help hoping that he would come back safe and sound, and then, she said, who knows? And she said she felt sure he *would* be back – although in reality she was not at all sure. Finally, they agreed to exchange photographs. It was a soldiers' tradition, he told her.

He had tried to explain things to his parents, when they had come for Elizabeth's wedding, but hadn't been very articulate. His mother had said she didn't at all want to be like those women in the last war, who had urged their men to go and fight, but this war was different, and if he wanted to get into the army, she had to agree that it was the right and proper thing for any fit young man to do. His father didn't say much, but seemed to agree, if only reluctantly.

The school had advised him that the best thing he could do was to apply to take part in a cadet training course, that had been set up precisely for boys like him. He was very fit, had a good Higher Leaving Certificate, and in addition had done very well at Rugby. So he would certainly be seen as a potential officer. If he had heard stories from the last war, he should realize that this one was very different. All soldiers put their lives at risk, but this one did not mean almost certain death to junior officers, even in the front line, as that one had. He was promptly accepted, and left Kirkton a



few days after the school holidays began. He promised his parents that if he were posted anywhere near London, he would spend his leaves with them. He surprised Ann, and in fact everybody, when he gave her a big hug and kissed her on the forehead. Otherwise his parting was unemotional, in the Scottish way.

Marjory told her parents that she had quite a different plan from Jim's. She would join the Wrens when she was eighteen, but she would use her time until then trying to learn a few things that school had not taught her. One set of them could be done at evening classes, where she could learn typing and shorthand. During the day, she could easily get a temporary unskilled job that would bring in some pocket money, and she thought she had found one that was low-paid, but would provide another valuable opportunity. The mother of a girl in her class at school had a wartime job driving a small delivery van, was to get an assistant, and had promised to ask the van's owner if she could take Marjory on as a learner driver. She would also take driving lessons. Her father, much impressed, said he would get her a typewriter to practise on, and would pay for the lessons, and in fact would do so whether she got the job or not. Anyway, she did, and her whole scheme worked remarkably well. She easily passed the driving test and obtained her licence, and turned out to be a naturally good driver. She was afterwards to tell her children about these initiatives, and to say that "that was how the war was won". She had a point.

**Pillow talk**

*I've been dreading this for a long time.*

*Me too. But what could we have done? We just have to hope he gets through it as well as I did, last time.*

*I suppose we should be proud of him. But that's not how I feel at all.*

*I know. He seems to have made some deal with Marjory Forbes. We must keep in touch with her.*

## Prospects

IN THIS SUMMER of 1941, the war news was bad. The blitz moved briefly, but with a huge number of casualties, to Scotland. Merchant shipping was still suffering great losses, and we were feeling the pinch of rationing and other restrictions. Our little group in Kirkton had lost not only the Anderson parents, but now also Elizabeth and Jim, and Marjory would be going soon. We had added my grandmother to our household.

John I and were beginning to wonder, not just about ourselves, but also about where the world would have got to by the time we left school. We didn't include Alastair and George in our deeper conversations, and what they talked about to each other, I don't know. Girls, maybe. Alastair had a bicycle, and George's mother had saved to buy him

one too – before they went off the market, she said – and they seemed to be intent on exploring Scotland, beginning with all the country within about thirty miles of home.

Our sub-group of four, entering the senior school, had to decide on what subjects to study for our Highers. Alastair and George seemed very casual about it, and accepted a fairly standard mix – you were not allowed to specialize too narrowly in Scotland. John never in his life approached such a matter casually. He began with a long session with his father at the time of the wedding, and added a shorter one, at his father's behest, with his mother. It was she, I believe, who made the key observation that if he was going to be any kind of scholar, what he needed at this stage were the tools of the trade, so he should do both Latin and Greek, and as for a modern language, German was the one to go for. He had been doing French in the lower school, and that could be built on in other ways.

According to John, his father would really have liked him to take on just about every subject that was taught at the Academy, but had in the end admitted that you had to have some guiding principles, and that his mother's idea was indeed a sound one. Mr Anderson had always felt that his own "little Latin and less Greek" was a handicap. He didn't think English, which was obligatory, was all that important; John's writing was already very good for his age, and he read, if anything, too much. Everybody also had to do some maths, and he hoped John would take that seriously. As for science, he had a very poor opinion of the national

curriculum. He wished he could be at home, where he could help John to supplement the school's inadequate approach. Maybe Mrs Stewart could find time to help him with biology in particular – he had heard that she had made a good start!

In the end, he also made one good, and altogether typical suggestion: John should do something *creative* as an entirely extra-curricular hobby. What about drawing and painting, for example? He seemed to have at least some talent in that direction, and he would not be doing any art at school. He could start very easily – just get a sketch book and a few pencils. Miss Scott, if she was still around, must have some knowledge of the practical elements as well as the history and theory of it all.

John did speak to Miss Scott several times, during the summer term, at the end of the school day. He told me that she said she had concluded long ago that she had no artistic talent herself. She did have an old practical book on drawing, which she gave him, as she was never likely to use it, and she lent him another work, which had a lot in it about the theory of perspective, that she had acquired when she was taking a particular interest in Brunelleschi. She said it was mainly just to let him see what a complicated subject it was, in all its mathematical details. He needn't even try to apply it. Very few modern artists did !

Towards the end of term, she made another of those semi-formal announcements that seemed so typical of her. She told him that her PhD thesis had been

accepted, and that she had applied for a lecturer's post at Edinburgh University.

For the first time, his next contact with her was on *his* initiative. With my mother's approval, he asked her if she would like to come to tea on the last Saturday before the school closed, and to stay on and discuss his school programme with her. The others left us at the dining table, and I was allowed to stay and listen. He knew what he was doing, and that this request would give her pleasure, which it certainly did. He began by recounting briefly what his parents had had to say. She said that she very much agreed with all of it, and was particularly interested to hear his father's comments on school science. She knew enough about it to realize that what he had said was all too true, and that it was a national disgrace.

But then she asked, hadn't John noticed that there was something missing, so far. What about history? John said he had indeed noticed, and that was one reason for asking for her advice now. She herself had worked only in the lower school, but she remarked that she could talk quite freely about the upper one, because she had nothing but good to say about it. Her colleague, who taught the senior pupils, was one of the retired teachers who had come back, and he was a brilliant man. It was really him, and not her, that should be teaching at university level. It would be the greatest pity if John could not benefit from attending his classes. He had to cover the prescribed curriculum, but he also did the kind of thing John's father would approve of,

and tried to interest his pupils in history itself as a subject – how it was studied, and its significance for modern educated people.

She ended by saying that in her opinion, John had a clear case for asking to do the full six years. He would only just be seventeen at the end of the fifth year, with a full year to go to call-up time – always supposing this war lasted that long. What he had already been leading up to implied a heavy load of classical and modern languages, along with at least the minimum requirements in English, maths and science. Certainly, if he added history, he just couldn't do it all, as it needed to be done, in the space of two years. She herself would regard history as the keystone of the arch, but perhaps John would think that was going too far. She had one further suggestion. Try to make room for at least “lower” geography; it's a vital adjunct to any serious history study.

She offered to speak to the teacher who would be dealing with John's timetable, but John said that he now had a very clear idea of what was important to him, and he thought that the teacher in question would do what he could. He had been John's English teacher in the third year, and they had got on well.

I was impressed by this high level dialogue, but I thought of my own case as something quite different. Like Alastair and George, I said I would just go along with the unspecialized majority. I knew that, unless there was some disaster, I was going to be first a good wife for my

Jo, and the mother of his children, second a good amateur musician, and third, a business woman with a modest but quite considerable fortune to manage. It wasn't an order of priorities, but rather, it has all fitted in together. As I see it, I haven't even needed good luck, but only the absence of bad luck, for all of this to come true, with only minor deviations and disappointments here and there.

One outcome of these decisions would be that I would leave school a year earlier than John, and to that extent we would be out of step. This was to have both disadvantages and advantages, but wasn't all that serious.



# The war grinds on

**I**N THE SUMMER of 1941, the blitz continued in London, although it was less intensive. Scotland suffered its few major bombing raids of the war, the worst of which struck Clydebank. What was to prove a key turning point came when the Soviet Union was forced into the war by the German attack. British merchant shipping was having severe losses, and as a result rationing was getting tighter.

George's mother came for visits as often as she could, looking a little more prosperous and healthier each time, and the Forbes family began to regard her as a personal friend. Eventually they asked her, what kept her in Glasgow? Nothing really, just inertia, she supposed. It was her home town, and until George was evacuated she had hardly ever been anywhere else. She now had no family of her own, and her husband's had given her no help at all after he died.

Mr Forbes said it would be very easy to find work for her in Kirkton; in fact he knew that the Stewart business was

always short of people, and could give her some job that didn't need physical strength. Now that so many evacuees had gone home, and so many people had gone off elsewhere, there were a lot of under-occupied houses, and it should be easy enough to find somebody who could provide part of one for her and George. George himself was now at an age when he would be more of a help than an encumbrance, and there would always be an open door for him at both the Forbes and the Stewart houses, as there would be for her too. And so it was arranged. Mr Stewart not only provided a job, but also sent a small van to Glasgow to pick her up with all her movable belongings. Alastair was pleased that he would have his own room to himself all the time, and the two boys assured each other that they would continue to do things together.

It was Mrs Morriston herself who set them off on one new activity. She said that a lot of young Glasgow people were now taking to the youth hostels, and going off for weekends, or in the holidays, mostly on bicycles. The boys joined the Scottish Youth Hostel Association, and from then on, until they were called up, spent a great deal of their free time on explorations, which now had the potential to take them into almost any corner of Scotland, or even south across the border into England. John and Alison said they didn't like the idea of these long bike rides, and preferred to get their exercise on foot, on long walks in the surrounding hills. In that summer of 1941 they also went several times with Elizabeth and Philippe for short strolls down by the river, and generally, where the paths allowed two to go side by side, Alison attached herself to Elizabeth, and John to

Philippe. Both pairs seemed to find plenty to talk about, despite the differences in age.

Mr Anderson began an exchange of letters with Jim, now on a course somewhere in the north of England, who explained that he would address most of his to his father, who was to pass them on to his mother as he thought fit, and that he would also write to her, although less often. The reason for this was soon apparent, and it gained in force as the war went on. What he wanted to discuss were military matters, and he could write about these with fewer inhibitions, to his father. Mr Anderson, of course, passed them all on, and his wife was much amused, while still worried about this strange boy of hers.

For her part, she had what she thought was a very nice letter from Marjory, who told her exactly what had been said at the ball, and what she really thought about it. She wanted to make it clear that she was just doing her duty, and didn't have any romantic attachment to Jim. As he was now (and as she was now, herself) he wasn't her kind of ideal partner, although she did *admire* him. But, as she had said to him, who knows? They might both change a lot before the war was over. She left out any speculation about whether he would survive it, injured or whole, or as to whether she was likely to form any other attachments in the meantime. His mother thought privately that it was very unlikely that *he* would.

In Edinburgh, Elizabeth, on her own admission, had studied only a little more than she had to, to pass her exams. However, even before she met Philippe she had liked reading the nineteenth century classics and, perhaps because of her

London upbringing, she was especially fond of Dickens, so the lectures on English literature did arouse some enthusiasm. She found, rather to her surprise, that the academic approach to these matters enhanced her appreciation of the other great writers, and that even Scott somehow became more readable.

Her home life with Philippe was far from ideal. They only had their bedroom to call their own, although it was a fairly large one. They used it most evenings as a sitting room, and only really had to join Elizabeth's uncle and aunt at meal times. But they agreed philosophically that they were lucky to have their room, and they must hope to do a bit better in a couple of years' time, when they should have more money at their disposal. They had agreed that they would have no children until then at least. Philippe said he knew what to do about that, even if she didn't – but in fact she knew as much as he did. Her aunt told Mrs Forbes that she had resolved that she would not on any account pass on news or views about the young marrieds, and that she had told Elizabeth of this resolution, so that they would know they were not being spied on.

Elizabeth had felt that she was obliged to go on doing her voluntary work at the convalescent centre. However, she had told the lady in charge that as she now had similar work at home, she could only do two or three evenings a week. As far as possible she limited it to filling in for other helpers when they were absent.

She and Philippe had done all they could to help their one-legged best man, Pierre. Elizabeth had even gone in for a bit of matchmaking on her own, by introducing him

in turn to two of her university friends. Her second effort was successful, and ended up rather similarly to her own case, except that the bridegroom had no academic interests, and relatively limited English. At least in the short term, he had to settle for helping with some French conversation groups organized by the consulate. His wife, who had been selected as having fluent French, seemed content with this situation for the time being, and explained that she had enough money from her parents for them to live on. And after the war ... who knew? It all seemed very uncertain. The four of them occasionally arranged an evening out together, and Edinburgh still managed to attract some good plays to its theatres. There were restaurants still open too, but the food was not very good, and cost too much.

Elizabeth and Philippe decided to spend the long vacation at Kirkton. Marjory was moving into what had been George's room, so that they could have the attic – “the place we're most likely to be left in peace”, Elizabeth said. Philippe found that he could manage the ladder up to it easily enough. Both of them had plenty to do. It looks like holiday reading, they told Marjory, but observe the difference: we have notebooks, and they will be much used.

Both of the Forbes parents took a great liking to their son-in-law, and it was fully reciprocated. “They are everything I liked in the ordinary Scottish people I met before the war”, he told Elizabeth, (who wondered what, exactly, he meant by “ordinary”). “For one thing”, he continued, “you don't have to guess whether what they are saying is or isn't what they mean, as you have to learn to do with English people”. Elizabeth said that Scottish outspokenness could

sometimes go too far and become mere rudeness, and devious English ways could sometimes oil the workings of social life, but she too preferred things to be honest and straightforward.

This prompted him to admit that he had a belated confession to make. His pre-war visit had been spent with two different families who knew his parents. Both families, he said, had been very upper class – on the fringes, at least, of the Scottish aristocracy – and he hadn't suggested inviting them to the wedding. As far as he was aware, they didn't know he was in the country. Apart from the circumstances of the wedding itself, they would have been quick to take in other indications that he now had very little money, and that his new friends were not of their, or his parents' class, but middle-class professionals. They might want to take him over, while he was happy the way he was. He hadn't got in touch with them after Dunkirk because he had come to identify himself with the ordinary soldiers. In France at least he had come to dislike and distrust the people on the right wing of politics.

Elizabeth didn't like some of this, but she could see that if he did anything to contact these people now, relations with them could be difficult, and if Philippe was really happy as he said he was – as he seemed to be – it was best to do nothing about it. What did worry her, however, was what this augured for the future, when she would have to be introduced to his parents in France. He assured her that that was another matter altogether. Relations between them and her (and her family) were an entirely different thing from dealing with these third parties in Scotland. He was

quite sure that his parents would accept her for what she was, which was to say, the best possible wife he could ever have found. Her parents were also the kind of people they liked, just as he did. She might have some difficulties in adjusting to life in France, but they would be much the same as a foreigner had in any country, and nothing to do with class snobbery. She replied briefly that she hoped he was right, and that she would try not to cross her bridges before she came to them.

Mr and Mrs Anderson worked it out that the August bank holiday came too soon after their trip north to the wedding, and that they would make an effort to go to Kirkton for a week when nobody else would be on holiday, in early December. They could at least deliver their Christmas presents which, at Mr Anderson's suggestion, would all be books. There was a good bookshop, still well stocked, not far from his bank, and he would have plenty of time to browse its shelves and find something for everybody on his list of names. "Don't forget Maggie and George", his wife reminded him. "They will be around when presents are being handed out, and mustn't be left out. And try to find something special for Mrs Campbell". They could have a day in Edinburgh, for old time's sake, and take Elizabeth and Philippe out to lunch. She had heard that you could still get one, at a controlled price, in the big hotel restaurants, but you had to book a table well in advance.

With Jim gone, John found he had a room to himself again, and he pointed out to Mrs Stewart that it would make very little difference to him if he did a straight swap with Mrs Campbell. It didn't seem right to make an old lady

cross to the other house every night, when he could do it instead. He would have been surprised if he had known that this move relieved his hostess from the slight worry she was beginning to have, about him sleeping in a single room in the same house as Alison, even although Ann was a kind of chaperon.

### **Pillow talk**

*What do you make of Jim's letters? He seems to think I should understand his ideas and how he feels, just because I was in the army the last time. But in fact it's all very different. Nobody ever suggested sending me on a cadet training course.*

*What do you make of all he has to say about being "regimented" and so on? I suppose it all goes back to that business with the Scouts. It gets a bit convoluted and I can't really make sense of it.*

*Neither can I, and I don't suppose he can himself. I think he really likes the army, but he has all these other ideas in his head. And some army discipline can seem very stupid to an intelligent young man.*

*We'll have to see how he comes out of this training and what they'll put him into.*

*There are a lot more options nowadays. Maybe there is a niche for him, if he can find it.*



*We get the other side of him in his letters to me. I'm sure poor Marjory is being treated to something similar. It's almost as hard to follow as what he writes to you. In our day there were a lot of young men who did much the same sort of thing, but they set about it in a simpler way, somehow.*

*If he ever gets a platoon to command, they'll wonder what has hit them, but I suppose that in his own quaint way he'll make a good officer, when it comes to the essentials.*

## Senior school

FROM MID-1941 TO MID-1943, as the war spread to engulf almost the whole globe, John and I, along with Alastair and George, had to concentrate on our last years in the little world of Kirkton Academy. Three of us were cramming into two years what was meant to take three, while John was going to do the extra year, but had taken on more than the usual number of subjects in which he was to aim at passes – and more than just passes – and to take most of them at the “higher” level.

My experiences were very ordinary, shared by the great majority who were undergoing senior secondary education at this time. John’s would be a more interesting story to reconstruct from his memories of it all, because for most subjects he was given tuition in small *ad hoc* classes, under some of the best teachers. But he says his memories are too dim, and overlaid by too many later, more vivid ones. Sometimes there would be only

half a dozen pupils, while for one class, I remember that there were only two of them, the other being a girl whom I envied. I never understood how she got there, as she was more of an athlete than an intellectual. In Greek, in his final year, he even had some individual tuition.

The only class that he could recall afterwards for its subject matter had a small group of highly motivated boys and girls studying history, which he said was everything that Miss Scott had said it would be, and much more. He saw it as being at the root of his interest in some of the topics he was to take up later in life. He was also given to claiming that this was the swan song of the Scottish educational system, with dedicated, very hard working, highly qualified teachers. I once told him he only saw a tiny part of it, at the academically oriented top end, but he responded with: "Isn't that the bit that matters?"

John added to his heavy load of homework, and the other three of us to our only relatively light ones, by devoting two hours a week to the study of zoology, under the guidance of my mother. This was Mr Anderson's doing. The school taught no zoology, and as he said, this was an absurd gap in anybody's education. He was probably also right to direct us to zoology rather than botany, claiming that it was far easier to pick up information about plants as you went through life, on your own. He said that one key part of biology, genetics, was much the same in both plants and animals. One answer might have been to take up biology later on, at university, but he correctly forecast that none of

us would be taking courses in which that would have been possible. What about Jim? He's different, Mr Anderson said, and anyway, one possibility was that he would still go to university after the war, and do something that included the life sciences.

My mother protested feebly that she had only been a nurse, and not even a first-year medical student, but he brought all his charms to bear, and told her that she was one of the most intelligent women he knew; that as he had heard, she had already proved what a good teacher she was; and that she herself would get a lot out of his scheme. "Teaching is the best way of learning" he said. It sounds like one of his stock of quotations, but if it is, I don't know where he got it from.

The theoretical part was easy enough to cope with, and a lesser man might have thought it would suffice – that all you needed were one or two well illustrated textbooks. But he said no, that was precisely what he did *not* have in mind. Practical work was the essence of the thing. Could they not at least get a rabbit and dissect it? They needn't be very ambitious – just the identification of its main organs, and some discussion of their functions. On reflection he said, better make it two rabbits! If the book they used illustrated a rat's insides and not a rabbit's it wouldn't matter; there isn't much difference between rodents and lagomorphs. Ideally, we should have a human skeleton to study, but that, he conceded, would be going too far. The St Andrew's book must have a

good illustration; their course was hot on anatomy. Marjory should have one. He hoped that Elizabeth and Jim had theirs with them.

Another aspect of the subject that he thought was of prime importance was the classification of the animal kingdom. He was astonished by how few of his acquaintances knew anything about it. Some of them didn't even know about the most basic divisions, like vertebrate and invertebrate. A lot of that would have to depend on books, but we should at least do some simple things like looking at any common insect and any common spider, and seeing how they differed. And in fact we should be encouraged to take a closer look at any of the common animals we came across daily – earthworms for instance – and see what the books had to say about their nature and their place in the great scheme of things.

My poor mother ended the discussion by saying what a pity it was that John's father would be so far away, but if she intended this to be taken at more than its face value it was lost on him. As usual, most of what he had had to say turned out to be perfectly correct, and Mum said at the end of the two years that she *had* learned a great deal of very interesting stuff, even if it was at an elementary level, and she was sure that most of it had got through to her pupils. And John was later to say that he just couldn't see how so many of his scholarly colleagues thought they could understand anything about the world, when they knew so little about biology, or of man's place as an animal, among all other living things.

I thought that Mr Anderson's response to such remarks was an interesting one. He said it was a pity one couldn't do the same for economics as we had done for biology, but "economics is not for children". He said that even as an experienced banker he couldn't get the hang of it, and in any case it seemed improbable that the right answers had been found yet, as so many incompatible views were in circulation.

## Ann and Maggie

**A**NN WAS DIFFERENT from either of her two brothers – who were not at all like each other – in more ways than just being a girl. Her father, who had always doted on her, and for whom she was now his most frequent correspondent, said she got all her good qualities from her mother. She missed him dreadfully, and she was the only one of the children who demanded to speak to him whenever it was he who phoned at weekends.

Fortunately, however, she was able to accept Mr Stewart as a substitute father in some ways, and indeed she made friends readily. Alison was just like a big sister, sometimes someone to confide in, and sometimes inclined to domineer. All her life Ann saw John as her most dependable supporter. But her “best friend” was Maggie, whom she had got to know in the elementary school and who now stuck by her in the Academy. They always sat together, and were frequently reprimanded for talking, or rather whispering to each other. After school they went together to one or

other of their homes – the adults responsible for them demanded advance notice of which it was to be – to do their homework.

What really brought them together was their old-fashioned taste for the domestic arts. Both could knit socks for their fathers before they left the elementary school, and they didn't need any pressure to take up embroidery. They were great experts at it in later life, and produced some very fine pieces.

Cooking in wartime is mainly remembered for jokes about what you could do with dried eggs, now coming in from America, along with the much more popular Spam and other foodstuffs, but in Kirkton those who knew the surrounding countryside had their sources of real eggs, and the occasional half pound of country butter, or even of cheese, which was now made by only a very few farmers' wives. Maggie's father was the manager of the town's main grocery, and wholesale supplies of rationed goods always made small allowances for "wastage". He argued casuistically to his wife that since these were just notional and the sugar, etc. that was involved had ceased to have any legal existence, it wasn't really black marketing for the staff to appropriate it. Ann and Maggie learned how to make the best use of what was available, and began to build up their collection of old recipes. Both Mrs Stewart and Maggie's mother boasted of how helpful the two of them were in the house, a most unusual claim to be made about teenage girls.

At Christmas 1941, when the world was talking of little else than Pearl Harbour and its probable consequences, Ann's immediate concern was whether she was to see a



pantomime that year. Nobody else showed any interest, and it was eventually Mr Stewart who announced that *he* would take her to Edinburgh. She deserved some reward for being so helpful, and he himself was badly in need of a little relaxation. He asked Maggie's parents if he could take her too, and the three of them all said it had made for a most enjoyable Saturday afternoon and evening in the city. Anybody who saw them together would never have guessed that they were not blood relations, and he said he was sure many had envied him his good-looking nieces, or whatever they were. Alison tried not to feel put out, but rather regretted having turned down the offer to include her in the outing – intellectual snobbery, her father said.

At least she would come into her own when they had a little concert, that featured some simple pieces played by Marjory, who was still at home, and Elizabeth, who had come again with Philippe for the Christmas vacation. She and Ann had got together to practise a piano duet, which was the last item, and went down well with all the company. They had even practised to close the proceedings with deep curtsies, perfectly executed, hand-in-hand.

Mrs Campbell said it was just like old times. She was sure John was going to be a great singer. She had been delighted by the present Mr Anderson had found for her – a rather extravagant one, as she realized it must have been, as it featured many large colour reproductions of nineteenth-century paintings of the Highlands, which in those days were expensive to print to such a high standard.

### **Pillow talk**

*Sometimes I think short visits only make things worse. Mary says Ann cried when she went to bed the day we left, which is something she hardly ever does.*

*I know just how she feels. I tell myself that there must be thousands – millions, I suppose – who are having a much harder time than us. But it doesn't really help.*

*No, we're missing the best years of their lives. They seem to have had a good Christmas, in spite of everything*

*I used to worry most about Jim. But now the one in my thoughts is Ann.*

*I used to think you spoiled her. But now she's the most attractive of all the children we know. Maybe spoiling is what little girls need.*

*I've had another of my big ideas. London is still dangerous, and travelling is no fun, but this bit of Surrey is safe enough, and the young are hardier than us when it comes to travel, so maybe we could get Ann and John – and Alison, of course – to spend this summer here.*

*Where could they stay?*

*I've discovered that the pub along the road used to let rooms, but now the owner says it's too much trouble – he and his wife are getting older. Maybe we could make a deal with him. We can go in for a pint tomorrow and see what he might agree to.*

*If you put your mind to it you could charm the birds off the trees, so I'm sure you can do something.*

*I can try. It's still six months away, but it could give us something to look forward to. Them as well.*

## The middle of the war

**M**Y LAST TWO years at school saw huge changes of fortune in the war. The entry of the Japanese brought great disasters, first at Pearl Harbour and shortly afterwards at Singapore, and also British naval losses. But as we now know, the tide was soon to turn in favour of the allies. By the end of this period Germany was being stopped, losing huge numbers of men in Russia, and beginning to retreat in North Africa.

American soldiers began to appear in Britain, but mostly in the south and east of England. I don't think a single one ever appeared in Kirkton, and there weren't many to be seen even in Edinburgh, but the newspapers were full of stories about them. Mr Anderson told us they were not uniformly popular with the natives, although it could easily be predicted that, just as in 1917-18, they would play a vital role in Europe, as well as in Asia and the Pacific.

The Anderson parents had come on their visit in December 1941. Early in the next year John told me that they had announced that they had no plans for coming north in the "foreseeable future", but were having ideas about how he and I and Ann might be able to visit them instead – not in London, but in their Surrey place. Mr Anderson had

written a preliminary letter to my parents, but it was only an outline scheme and a request that I should be one of the party. The details would follow later.

Elizabeth and Philippe came again at Easter, and this year it was all rather like it used to be before the war, with everybody joining in a big clean up of the two gardens. The heavy digging now fell to Mr Forbes and John, while the rest of us weeded and trimmed and sowed our seeds. The country was being exhorted to “dig for victory” so we did what we could to increase the production of vegetables – as well as extending the strawberry beds. We needed *some* little luxuries, we said.

Then in July Jim came on a short leave between his cadet training and his commissioning as a second lieutenant in the Black Watch, whose peacetime recruiting area covered Kirkton. Marjory was still around, but the two of them saw remarkably little of each other, considering that they were supposed to have some sort of “understanding”. Marjory went on with her van-driving job and didn’t miss any of her evening classes.

Jim said he thought his regimental attachment would only be something of a formality, as he had applied to enter a commando training course. My mother asked if he had told his parents about this and he said no, not yet. However he put it they would react badly, but he was trying to work out what he could say. He would write to them very soon.

My mother had ended her First World War service a convinced pacifist, but had reluctantly conceded that the

Nazis had to be resisted. Many people hardly thought about such things any more. There was coming to be a different division, however, between those who thought it was wrong to attack civilians, and those who said war was now “total” and that no distinction could or should be made. Not that there was anything new about the deliberate massacre of women and children, as every reader of the Old Testament knows. Rightly or wrongly, my mother went on denouncing the British and American bombing of civilian targets throughout the war, from Hamburg, Berlin and Dresden to Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. John and I agreed with her all the way. I’m not sure that my father did, but he never said much about it. Whereas my mother was deeply worried about Jim, I think my father saw him simply as a young hero.

Marjory went into the armed forces soon after Jim went into his commando training. It was commonly said that girls chose a service according to which uniform they liked best, but Marjory told me she had had something else in mind. “I want to travel”, she said. “If this were peacetime I would be trying to get a job that would take me overseas. I think my best chance is with the Wrens”. From that point of view, at least, this turned out to be a sound choice, and before the war ended she had seen service in Nova Scotia, Gibraltar, Malta, Ceylon, and for a short time after the Japanese surrender, in Singapore.

Her driving licence also proved to have been a sound investment. After the first year she had acquired a good reputation as a skilled and resourceful driver, and found

she was driving the navy's best cars and listening to the conversations of anyone from destroyer captains upwards. Somewhere in the system there was a dossier that said her background had been checked, and that she presented no security risk. The man who wrote it would have liked to add: "her father is a Scottish banker," as his clinching bit of evidence, but thought better of it. She was also in great demand as a dance partner, but beyond making this boast, she refused to be drawn further on such topics, when we all compared notes after the war.

**Pillow talk**

*Don't ask me about Jim. Something like this has been coming for a long time. He's an extremist. There are three possibilities: he'll somehow survive intact, he'll be wounded, or he won't survive. In all three cases he will be seen as a hero. Maybe it's only us who would rather see him doing something less courageous.*

*I wonder what Marjory makes of it.*

*Perhaps nothing much, at present. But in the long term, whatever happens to him, she's drawn into it now.*

*I wish we could see him before he gets into the thick of it. But I think he'll want to spend whatever leaves he has in Kirkton.*

# Summer in Surrey

MRS ANDERSON was wrong on one point. Jim had cunningly given his “home address” to the army as the lodgings in Surrey, so after he had completed his training and spent some time with a commando unit in Scotland, she had had a phone call from Perth to say he had been given a short leave and was coming to see them “as soon as he could”. Some forty-eight hours afterwards he turned up late in the evening, proudly wearing his uniform, with the famous green beret. They said that if they had known exactly when he would arrive they would have been able to arrange something better, but just for now, could he doss down on an inflatable mattress in their little sitting room? They could at least provide a hot bath and something to eat. “After those train journeys”, he said, “I could sleep on the bare boards”.

He knew that his brother and sister and Alison were also in the village, and said he looked forward to seeing them the next day. His father had to leave early, and his mother also had to be in her office by seven o’clock, as it worked twenty-four hours a day on a shift system, and that was when hers began. But if he just waited in the flat the others



would soon be there, looking for breakfast, which he could share with them. To avoid more serious talk, his mother asked if he had brought any kind of ration card, and he said yes, they had given him something that was supposed to be one week's worth. "You look fit," his father said. "I certainly should", he replied, adding gratuitously that "they didn't have training like ours in your day". In the morning he was sound asleep, and they didn't wake him, but left him as a surprise for the "children".

They found him up and listening to the radio. Ann, who was a great believer in reciprocity, kissed him on the cheek, but the other two just said hello. The two girls set to work to provide a simple breakfast, leaving John to think of something suitable to say. He began with "I thought you would be in uniform". Jim explained that he had in fact travelled in it – it could be a great advantage to do so – but he wanted to forget about the army for a few days, and had changed into his one set of civvies. He said he would be leaving them here. "How long have you got?". "I have to report on Monday to a place in Hampshire. It can't be very far, if I can work out how to get there. My travel warrants should tell me". John said it would almost certainly be best to take a train into London, get to another station by tube, and go out again from there. It was already Thursday, so he only had four days.

"What is there to do around here?" Jim asked. "Not much", his brother replied. "I almost said *walking*. This part of Surrey must be one of the best places in the country for that. But I suppose it's the last thing you would want to do". Alison put in a word from the kitchen, through the

open door: "If you really want to forget the army, there's one place that would be ideal, and it's easy to get to from here by bus. That's the garden at Wisley. It belongs to the Royal Horticultural Society, and some people say it's the best garden in England. At least it probably has the best collection of garden plants. We went there a week ago, and we all said we'd like to have a second visit". "Maybe we could get Mum and Dad to go there too on Sunday", Jim suggested. "They must be missing things like gardens". Ann said she was sure they were, and it seemed a good idea, if Jim would like it. He said he thought he probably would, although, so far in his life, he had never taken much interest in garden plants. Ann said her father was usually far too tired to do much, but he would get a rest on Saturday, and might agree to join the outing on the Sunday.

When they had finished breakfast and tidied up, they took Jim to the pub, where he was to share John's room, and they told the owner there would be one more for lunch. They explained to Jim that Mr Anderson had arranged to rent the rooms without service, and the pub supplied their lunch on weekdays, when their mother had hers in her office canteen. It saved on their rations, like school meals, but the food was much better, even when the main item was just bread and cheese. They couldn't go into the bar, so in good weather they ate in the garden. That was technically illegal, but the village policeman didn't seem to mind. When it rained they took their food up to the bedrooms.

Both parents had fixed it that they could have a five-day week while their children were there, which they would make up for by putting in extra hours in the autumn and winter

months. It was taking advantage of their seniority, their father said, but the truth was that they were both very popular with their junior colleagues, who didn't grudge them this indulgence in the least.

For the rest of the morning, they sat in the garden and talked. Ann said it was just like being back in Fontainebleau, which of course put them in mind of Robert and Pauline. "I wonder what they are doing at this minute," Ann said, "I do hope nothing awful has happened to them". Could she but have known it, their friends were actually in Fontainebleau at this very time, staying, as they now did every summer, with their aunt and uncle.

Jim told them that his training camp had been in Argyll, further north from Alison's grandparents' house, on a similar bit of the coast, with the same sort of country inland. The main difference was the house. The one the commandos had taken over was much grander – a real castle, he said.

What comes next? John asked. "Even if I knew, I couldn't tell you", his brother replied, "but there is sure to be something – that's what we're there for. And then the usual reward is to give us a short leave, so I expect I'll be back here before winter sets in".

Ann asked if it was true that commandos were taught all sorts of ways for killing enemy soldiers silently, but was immediately shushed by Alison, who said all that kind of thing was not for talking about. Jim put it more kindly, but said he agreed. "It's not because you're a girl either", he said, "the same goes for John, and I think even for Dad, although there are a few less bloodthirsty things I *would*

like to talk to him about”. One thing, though – when we get back to the flat, I can show you my commando knife.

When Mrs Anderson came home in the afternoon, her way led past the pub, so she called in to collect them. Jim showed them not only his fearsome weapon, but also his beret. John thought he was quite unreasonably proud of this, which was an ordinary enough piece of army head-gear, but then he had very little idea of what you had to do to earn one – and hadn’t the least intention of finding out.

Their mother announced that she had persuaded the village butcher to look under his counter and see if he hadn’t got something a bit special for her soldier son, and he had replied that indeed he had. “You Scotch people are always boasting about your beef”, he said, “but I bet you never had a bit of lamb like this”. He explained that it had been raised on the Romney marshes, but it might be better if she never knew how it had found its way up to this corner of Surrey. They had a tiny kitchen, but somehow they dined in style that evening on roast leg of lamb, with its traditional mint sauce, and Mr Anderson was able to produce a bottle of good French wine, whose history was even more lost in obscurity than that of the lamb. It was a most enjoyable meal, and for an hour or two that evening even Mrs Anderson almost forgot what was always nagging away in her mind.

For Friday morning, after the young ones had finished breakfast on their own, John and Alison said they had had an idea for passing the time before lunch. They told Jim it would be even more different from commando training than the Wisley garden, but they thought he might like it

for all that. It was Mr Anderson who had put them on to it. The one thing almost every English village had that was worth seeing, he had told them, was a church, and this one was no exception. It was unusually old, a substantial part of it going back to Saxon times. Jim really ought to see it.

Jim protested that he was no longer a practising Christian, to which John responded that neither was he nor Alison, but that the two of them had worked it out “long ago” that that didn’t mean you couldn’t take an interest in things like old churches. Their father, typically, had made up a file on this one, into which he had put every scrap of information he could find about it, neatly typed out. It included some of his best photographs, which alone would make it worth getting out again. He had told them recently that his own position was that he had been brought up as a good presbyterian, but that he had always been ashamed of the Scottish history of iconoclasm – which he said had often been just mob vandalism – and he greatly envied the English for having preserved their beautiful churches. If he hadn’t given up on organized religion, he would probably have gone over to Anglicanism. Ann took no part in this discussion. She thought she had better have a talk with her mother about such things.

They went back past the pub, and across the village green to the church. At first sight it wasn’t a very imposing building, quite small, set in a churchyard most of which was on the side away from the green, and beyond which they could see what was obviously the parsonage. John said his father didn’t seem to be interested in it, although it was a rather attractive Georgian house.

They passed through a lich-gate, the term being supplied by John as the first of many, for his big brother's edification, and up a short path, between old graves, to the church vestibule. John was in the lead, just stepping up to open the door, when it opened from the other side. A tall, but slightly stooped, elderly man came out, and was holding the door open for them to go in. His "dog collar" indicated that he was the parson himself. Instead of walking past him, John held out his hand, which the parson took automatically, from the habit of a lifetime. The following conversation then ensued:

"Good morning, sir. You must be Dr White".

"Ah, you know my name".

"Yes, I'm John Anderson. You've met my father. And this is my friend Alison, my sister Ann, and my brother Jim". Dr White shook hands all round. John added: "My father may have told you that we were coming for the holidays".

"He did indeed, but I seem to remember him saying there would be three of you".

"The extra one is Jim. He's only here until Monday. Then he's going to join his new army unit in Hampshire".

"That means you're the commando officer. You look very young!", he said, turning to Jim, perhaps feeling that he ought to have been dealing with the senior member of the party in the first place. Jim answered briefly that his age didn't seem to bother the commandos, and that he had managed it by leaving school at seventeen and doing the cadet course. The old man asked him what regiment he was in and seemed interested to hear that it was the Black

Watch. He explained that he had been a chaplain in the Great War, as he called it, had afterwards pursued an academic career, retired, and come back to be acting vicar here, while the real one in turn had gone off to be an army chaplain. John managed to reinsert himself at this point:

“My father told us about you. His latest interest seems to be in old English churches. He brought us here – except for Jim, of course, the first Sunday we were here. He has quite a thick file on this one and I saw your name on one collection of information about it”.

“He hasn’t shown that to me yet. He did say he would bring it along to check that he had got it right, and I expect he will one of these days. I have seen his photographs and he promised me copies of them all – they are really very good. He has given himself a hard life, and it’s amazing that he finds any time or energy for this hobby”

“By the way, he is trying to interest me in brass rubbing, and said I should ask your permission to begin here. He says at least two of yours are very well known ones.”

“That will quite be all right. You can come in any time. The church is always open, although I don’t know how long we can keep up that tradition. I suppose he pointed the brasses out, so I won’t come in with you now. I had better be going anyway, as I have to call in on an old lady in the village who hasn’t got much longer in this world. I’m pleased to have met you all and hope to see you again soon. I suppose there is no hope of making Anglicans of you, any more than of your father, but you are always welcome at our services. Sundays at ten”.

As soon as he had gone, Ann said "What a nice man. I do hope we can see him again". Then they went on into the church and John, in effect, played the part of tour guide to his brother, who was surprised and impressed by how John could recall so much information and by how interestingly he put it across. After lunch in the pub garden they went to the flat, and until Mrs Anderson came home in mid-afternoon they read through the file, which added some more historical information to what John had already provided. Jim said he hadn't realized that their father had become such a good photographer. It certainly took your mind off the war. Alison had been most impressed by the kneeling stools, embroidered by the ladies of the village. "Real *English* ladies, they must be", she said. "I wish I could meet some of them".

On the Saturday, Mr Anderson said he really must rest, although he would be spending some time in his dark-room, by which it turned out that he meant the bathroom, which he had adapted for his purposes. He said it had been easy enough, as there had already had to be an efficient black-out arrangement in place. His biggest job had been to contrive some light-proof ventilation. He would lock the door from the inside, and it might mean the bathroom was unavailable for an hour or two. He remarked that photographic materials were now very hard to come by, and he probably couldn't continue much longer. How was John getting on with his drawing? Maybe he could be a substitute for a camera? This remark did in fact stimulate John to make some sketches of the church, later in their visit, which all the rest of the party thought were good enough to print.



He himself, however, said he wasn't satisfied with these efforts. Maybe next year, he thought.

The two girls spent most of the day with Mrs Anderson, and the two boys went out for a walk together, into an extensive oak wood nearby. They agreed that it was a pleasant place for a walk, and no doubt of interest to naturalists, but it showed little sign of the care and attention that was bestowed on the forest of Fontainebleau. When they got back, and said something to their father to this effect, what could he say but "I told you so, at the time!".

They all enjoyed their visit to Wisley, and even the three young ones, who had previously gone there on their own, were surprised to find, as they had somehow not realized, that large parts of it were woodland, and that you could have quite a long walk through the estate, as well as admiring the great collections of garden plants. Those who went back at intervals later in their lives were astonished each time by the developments that took place, and how it had become even more interesting and useful. But they all agreed that it was not a particularly *beautiful* garden, as compared with others they had come to know in Scotland.

On Monday, Jim rose early to go and say goodbye to his parents and then, after they had breakfast with him, Ann, Alison, and John saw him off on the London train. Once again he hugged Ann and kissed her forehead, but this time it was worse. They all knew well enough that commando raids had high casualty rates. The other two spent most of the rest of the day trying to keep Ann – and themselves – from thinking too much about it.

### **Pillow talk**

*Sometimes I just can't bear it. From now on, every time we say goodbye it may be the last one.*

*It must have been the same for parents through all the ages. You just have to hope. And if the worst does happen, think of all the good things in his earlier life.*

*I wonder why Ann is the one most affected. Alison said she cried again, and was quite inconsolable.*

*She has the liveliest imagination, I suppose. It's a very mixed blessing.*

*Make the most of this summer with her. And maybe we can be with them for Christmas this year.*

*The war looks as if it could go on for ever.*

*No. Still far too long, but we are bound to win now.*

*I hope that's not an official secret.*

*It's just common sense.*

*Do you think it will catch John too?*

*It looks like it. But he won't do anything remotely like joining the commandos.*

*I'll take Ann with me when I call on the old padre next weekend. She seems to have taken an instant liking to him.*

## The Whites

MR ANDERSON TOLD us that he had phoned Dr White to ask if he could call on Sunday afternoon, and that he would like to bring his young daughter along. The old man had replied that he would be very pleased to see the young lady again, but in any case couldn't all the family come for afternoon tea? He was sure his wife would like to make their acquaintance, and that she wouldn't think it was any trouble. And then he had added what Mr Anderson said was a mild sort of moral blackmail – perhaps they would also like to come to the morning service? Mr Anderson had said he would ask us, and had remarked that we might in fact quite like to attend an English church service for once, although we were most unlikely to be converted. He had already explained his own position, and the rest of us had more or less similar ideas.

I asked why the vicar was called "Doctor". It was John who gave a full explanation, which later turned out to be correct. He had said that he had been an academic between the wars, which meant that he had been teaching

some kind of theology, most likely at Oxford, and to do that you had to have a doctorate. He must have studied some obscure subject and submitted a thesis on it – just like Miss Scott in fact, whom we should now be referring to as Dr Scott.

On Sunday morning it was Mrs Anderson who warned us that we would all have to bob up and down, sitting, standing and kneeling. “Just do what everybody else does”, she said. “If you don’t you’ll only make yourselves conspicuous and it would be rather rude”. There would be hymn books provided, and we would probably know some of the tunes, but in any case we should join in as best we could. “Don’t worry too much about what they call the ‘responses’”, she said – “plenty of the congregation don’t speak up as they are supposed to”. She must have been to this or some other English church before. I wondered when, or why, but didn’t ask. Other people’s weddings, perhaps.

The church was only about half full. There were some who knew Mr and Mrs Anderson, including a few who worked at the same place as her, and we stopped to speak to them afterwards. She made no attempt to explain our presence at church, but just introduced John and Ann and me. She told them that we had heard from Jim, who was now with his commando unit. As soon as we were on our own, Ann announced she would go to the church again, even if no one else did, saying that she had really liked Dr White’s sermon; it was all so sensible. John said he would go, just to keep her company, so I also agreed to do so.

When we arrived for tea, we were introduced to Mrs White, a kindly, matronly lady, just a little younger than her husband. Later, over the tea cups, she said they had a son and daughter of their own. They had been working in Oxford, but both had joined up at the very beginning of the war. They had said they couldn't do otherwise, as they had learned a great deal about the Nazis from some of the many refugees who had come there. Dr White had agreed that this was a "just war" if ever there was one. They were both much older than Jim, and were now doing staff work, somewhere in England, "making use of their Oxford education", and at least for the present, out of danger. Not like our Jim, who must be such a worry to us.

Dr White took Mr Anderson into his study to go over the typed notes. Afterwards all we were told was that "he really liked my pictures", and thought they might some day be used to illustrate a brochure on the old church, but at present it was virtually impossible to get anything like that printed. The next time we consulted the file, John pointed out that it had a revised version of the notes, although the changes were all quite small ones.

The rest of us were left with Mrs White. It was John – who else? – who directed the conversation to the subject of the parsonage. She more than shared his enthusiasm for it, and agreed that it was a pity that the church got all the attention, and such a beautiful house so little. "But not all that little", she said, and got out a pre-war magazine in which a long article had been devoted to it, and she said it

was mentioned in several books, that also had illustrations. She said there weren't any that could compare with it anywhere near, although of course there were plenty in the counties to both east and west of them. She thought the village was doubly blessed, to have such an interesting church, and to have been spared a Victorian rectory.

I asked if she could advise us on just where we should make for if we wanted a full day's walk, and again she turned to her collection of printed matter, produced a guide that she said had exactly what we needed, and told me I could borrow it. She and her husband had followed one of the routes it described "a very long time ago" and had had a memorable day. It wasn't much short of twenty miles, but was easy walking. We should be sure to wear suitable shoes – but then she said that of course we must know all about that, coming from where we did. They had had a great family holiday in the Highlands once, in the early 1930s.

When the two men rejoined the tea party, Dr White said he had been slow to think of it, but it had come into his head that "John Anderson" was a name well known to anyone familiar with Burns, which he was. He was a Northumbrian by origin, which helped with the dialect words, and *John Anderson my Jo* had always been a favourite, because of the sentiment it contained. I really couldn't refrain from saying "Actually, he's *my Jo*". We were, after all, sixteen now. "Ah", he said, "that explains a

lot". To my relief, John looked pleased by my revelation, if that's what it was. From then on, Dr White became one of my little group of four special men who, in Mr Anderson's formulation, "might occasionally be mistaken, but were never wrong".

Back at the flat, Mr Anderson said he was now intent on getting Dr White to discuss his religious ideas. He had a theory, he said, that there were grades of opinion, such that the most liberal modern theologians and the most open-minded scientists were separated by a very thin line. It seemed likely that he was on one side of the line, and the vicar on the other. But of course the vicar was clearly a real scholar, whereas he was only an interested ordinary citizen, and it would be difficult to keep his end up if they ever had a serious discussion. John listened to all this with the greatest attention, but didn't say anything to the point.

## Mixed news and views

**E**LIZABETH HAD completed her second year successfully. She wrote to Mrs Anderson, but only to say that she and Philippe had very little news, and she hoped it would stay that way. He was getting more private tuition work, and had got good passes in his BA studies. Both of them should graduate, at their different levels, next summer. And then they would see what could be done – and it certainly didn't look as if the war would be over soon.

After Jim left them the others still had four weeks of holiday to spend in Surrey. Dr White told them they were welcome to borrow any books they could find on his shelves. John found some that he had at least heard of, and with some guidance from the old scholar he picked out a few, including some items that he was surprised to find in the library of a doctor of divinity, such as Bertrand Russell's popular guide to philosophy. Ann found many story books she had heard of, but never read, in a collection that was still officially the property of the daughter of the house. As to books, Alison was somewhat harder to please, but she thought she was



even luckier, when Mrs White said she could come in at almost any time, and practise on the piano, for which her daughter had accumulated a great quantity of sheet music over the years.

Dr White always seemed to have time to talk to John, and when his father apologized for the way the boy was diverting him from his work the good vicar told him not to worry about that – it wasn't a very demanding parish, and he found John a very unusual teenager, well worth talking to. "He really thinks about the deeper questions, and sees that there are no easy, simple answers. He would make an excellent student at Oxford, and if he ever decided that that is what he would like, I would very willingly do what I could to help him find a place". When Mr Anderson passed on this offer, John said that it was an interesting idea, but there was still a war on, and it would probably be years before anything like that would come up.

Ann rather wished that Dr White would talk more to *her*, but she was almost as pleased by the attentions of Mrs White, who was much amused by Ann's old-fashioned ways – so different from her own daughter, she said. When Ann mentioned her interest in embroidery, Mrs White took her up to her bedroom and opened an old wooden chest that contained several pieces of the work she had done when she was younger, including what she said was her best effort, the baptismal gown she had made for her children. Ann said she hadn't yet got round to that kind of work, and Mrs White said she would try to look out a piece of material and all the things they needed, and would teach Ann how to set about it. She was as good as her word, and Ann was a quick

learner, so that by the time she returned to Kirkton she was able to begin work on what was to be a very beautiful blouse for her mother. She passed on her new skills to Maggie. Mrs Forbes said she could hardly believe her eyes, but there they were: two teenagers of the 1940s working away happily together, just as it might have been a century or two before.

Before the end of the school holidays, the Andersons had a short letter from Jim which, as something new to them in this war, had been stamped, with the squiggle of a signature, to say it had been passed by the censor. The letter itself explained that his unit had been told to write to their usual correspondents to warn them that there would be no more mail for “an indefinite period”, for security reasons. Mr Anderson said that could only mean they were now training for some particular raid.

It was in fact something much bigger than a mere raid. Jim’s commando was to take part in November in the major allied action that invaded North Africa at several points. His unit was the furthest east, at Algiers, and there had been very little fighting there. His parents guessed that he had been in this action somewhere, and told each other, correctly in this case, that no news was good news. But, his father said, this means he is now in the Mediterranean, and there will certainly be more action soon in that part of the world.

Letters started to arrive again, all stamped by the censor, and giving only a “field address” to reply to. Jim confirmed that he was alive and uninjured. When they wrote back they passed on some sad news, saying they didn’t know if he would have heard it already. His school friend Alex had been

killed. He was in the army, but had not been in any fighting. He had been travelling in a lorry at night, had somehow fallen out of it, and the driver of the next vehicle in the convoy had not seen him with his dim headlights, until too late. He was to be buried in Kirkton, and John had volunteered to go to the funeral, to represent the family. There was to be an official inquiry, but preliminary investigations indicated that it had been some kind of freak accident. Mr Anderson said to his wife that it all seemed strangely marginal. Alex had not been a close friend, and he could only just be thought of as a war casualty. Mrs Anderson wrote to his mother and sister, and told them that she had passed the news on to Jim. And she said to her own family that Alex wouldn't have been killed if it hadn't been for the war. She had found it very difficult to know what to say in her letter.

She was also keeping up a regular correspondence with Marjory, who had done as she had said she would, and applied to join the Wrens on her eighteenth birthday. She was now in Portsmouth, not all that far away, but with no prospect of leave in the near future. She had had much the same sort of correspondence with Jim as his mother had, and said that she too assumed he was now in North Africa. She said she was sure she had picked the right service, and had found that many of the other recruits were from backgrounds much like her own, and very easy to get on with. She was already doing some car driving, and hoped she would get more. Her later letters said that in fact she was now doing nothing else, and was beginning to be picked for the better jobs.

At about this time Mrs Anderson raised a new question with her husband. How did he think this move to London was going to finish, even if he had to stay on there until the war ended? Could they perhaps move permanently to Surrey? She rather liked life in England, even in these difficult times, and the children seemed to do so too. The climate was better, at least insofar as spring came earlier and autumn later. She had seen lots of attractive houses with good gardens. She wouldn't like to be any closer in to London, but people were commuting from further and further out, and there were good trains. If they could move soon they could reunite the family straight away.

Her husband said he was tempted, but he thought there were good reasons for not doing anything in the meantime. He had had a visit from one of the big chiefs of his bank, who had said that he had been much praised for having done what he did, and for having made a good job of it. When things were sorted out after the war, the reward would almost certainly be a top job in Edinburgh. In spite of its climate, he greatly preferred Scotland to England. As for the children, they were growing up fast. Jim was already an adult. John soon would be, and also they shouldn't interrupt his senior secondary course. It only occurred to her afterwards that he hadn't said anything about the implied separation of John from Alison. Only Ann stood to benefit much from a move, and he missed her as much as she seemed to miss him. But at least they had now worked out how to have their summers together, and they could make greater efforts to go north at Christmas and Easter. She was better off than girls in boarding schools, and at least she

had this great friend, Maggie. So, he said, he would like to carry on as they were. His wife said she supposed he was right, and she hoped the promise about Edinburgh would be fulfilled. She said she liked the place too, for all its faults.

**Pillow talk**

*When we heard from Alex's mother I couldn't stop myself from having the obvious thoughts – this might be me.*

*I know, but it also had a kind of settling effect. Even about our own son I've gone back to something like the fatalistic way we used to see things in my war. You may be lucky, as I was, or you may be killed or maimed at any moment. And you don't have to join the commandos to be at risk.*

*For all that, Jim is in extra danger. We can only live in the hope that he has your luck.*

## An idea

I WAS NOW sixteen, and beginning my last year at school, with what seemed the certain prospect of being called up, one year after that. John would still be in Kirkton, as one of the handful of pupils taking the sixth year. So one way for us to stay together a little longer would be to do something similar to what Marjory had done. In fact there would be an even easier option – I could work for the family firm, based at the textile warehouse.

However, I must have caught the rational planning bug from John, for I sat down one day, just as he might have done, and thought about it. What did I really want from life – always accepting that for some indefinite period after I was eighteen I would only have a limited say in the matter? I had already worked out that I had three dominant roles to look forward to – wife and mother, amateur musician, and business woman. I was quite realistic in accepting that, if there were no unexpected disasters, I would be a rich one. I had two sources for my expectations, the Stewart business as my father's eventual successor, and the

Campbell inheritance, which would be my mother's but which, she had already said, she regarded as mine.

My meditations produced one really new idea. It came partly from thinking about grandfather Campbell. If I had been a boy, he would have expected me to do something on my own initiative. But, I thought, why don't I do that too, even if I *am* only a woman? Feminism was in the air, and no doubt that had something to do with it. It opened up what could almost be called an infinite range of possibilities.

I could be, eventually, a sort of "sleeping partner", as I had heard such people referred to, in the Stewart textile and drapery combine, which should give me a secure income, and then with the Campbell money I could take up whatever kind of business really interested me. I knew enough about these things, taking my mother's attitude into account, to realize that at least part of the actual inheritance could be put to work in anticipation of its coming to me. It didn't seem like foolish speculation, but even if it didn't come off, I still had John to count on, as also contributing to our joint income. With his brains he was sure to get some reasonably well paid job.

So far, so good, but what *did* interest me? Like John, as he had told me once, I thought the geographical element was important. At least I had now seen something of France and a tiny bit of England, and I would like very much to do more travelling after the war, or even, as Marjory was hoping, during it.

The thought of “other places” put the picture of the west Highlands into my head, and it came to me that as well as money, the Campbell inheritance included what I thought was the most beautiful place imaginable. Could I factor this part of my expectations into something tangible? I must speak to John about all this, soon. I knew what the first part of his answer would be: “I still have two more years at school,  $x$  years of national service, four years to get a first degree, and probably another two or three to get a higher one, before I can hope to start the kind of career I want. Add it all up! Nobody can have any kind of detailed plan for where we might be, or what we might be doing, after all that”.

Sometimes we thought almost as identical twins do, and what he said was very close to my prediction. So I also had my answer ready. “We can hardly go wrong”, I said, “if we give ourselves one fixed base. Sooner or later, I’ll get my grandparents’ house back from the army, and I’ll have enough money to clear up the mess they will have left, refurbish and extend it, and turn it into a first class hotel. If I succeed, I can make the business grow in any of several different ways. And I think that at worst it will provide us with a great country home, and at least enough income to maintain itself. Let’s not go into details now, but I have plenty of ideas in my head. My well informed guess is that you are going to be some kind of academic, and we can also have a small town house, or even a flat – in Edinburgh, or Oxford, or wherever”. In reply, John made what also amounted to a little speech:



“Nearly all of that is just what I have been thinking myself. I know that I am going to marry a rich wife, but that’s not on my conscience at all, because I won’t be marrying her *because* she is rich. I’m sure your guess about my career is right, as far as it goes, although I’ll have to narrow down the subject options soon. And I had even been thinking about the old house, and what a great country home it could make. But you’ve slipped in one real surprise – wherever did you get this hotel idea from?”

I explained that I had simply been trying to assess my own capabilities. I had been in a few hotels, and nearly always had come away thinking that I could run the place much better! I obviously wasn’t an academic type like him, and my musical talents would never support a career. I had worked it out that hotel management needed a good head for business, knowledge of domestic things, including food, and an interest in people, all of which I thought I had. When you put it together with ownership of a fine old house with extensive grounds, on the Argyll coast, and enough capital to develop it, what else did it point to, if not a hotel?

“Is this leading to some idea of what you are going to do in your ‘free’ year?”. Once again, he had made the correct deduction. “Yes”, I said. “The obvious thing is to get some professional training. In fact, it was Mrs White who may have started all this kind of thinking. She asked me one day what I was aiming to do, and I said I hadn’t made up my mind. She said the old-fashioned options for a girl like me, in peacetime, would have been either a ‘finishing

school' or a domestic science course. We laughed at the first one, and I said I had no desire to be 'finished', and we went on to discuss the second one".

"She said she knew people who had been to the Atholl Crescent school in Edinburgh, and I should make inquiries about what it was doing in wartime. I did, and they said it was continuing as best it could. So my idea now is to choose a course there that would help in running a hotel. Just a better knowledge of cooking would help, but I think they have others that might be even closer to what I want".

"And where do I come in?" he asked. "You just stay in Kirkton and concentrate on your final exams!" I said. "I'll come at weekends". From then on, I had something new to look forward to, on the other side of this terrible war.

## Jim's war

**L**EFT TO THEMSELVES in Surrey, the Andersons dutifully kept up a correspondence with each of their children, as well as with Alison and Marjory, plus a weekly phone call, which somehow became, nearly always, a three-minute interchange between Ann and her father. Their thoughts, however, always turned to Jim. The BBC and the newspapers gave out very little news on which they could even base a guess as to where he was. Most likely, they thought, fighting, commando style, in North Africa. They were fairly sure he wasn't back in Britain, or he would have contacted them somehow. They were in fact correct. When they heard about it later, his father said it all sounded more like boys' adventure stories than real warfare.

Thanks partly to the teenagers, they had formed a lasting friendship with the Whites, and Mrs Anderson often called in on them on her way home from work. It filled in the blank spot in her day until her husband came home, often late, with the tale of a delayed train, or occasionally of difficulty in getting to his London station. And there were still his two fire-watching nights, when he didn't come back

from London at all. She found Mrs White to be a very sympathetic companion, and took up various small tasks to help her with her duties as vicar's wife. When she had any conversation with Dr White he kept his promise not to be a professional comforter, but talked to her, most often, about her early life. He was shrewd enough to guess (as by this time Mr Anderson had also done) that the organization she worked for must be doing more than humdrum translating, but he was careful to keep off that subject altogether.

In late November, the Whites' son and daughter managed to arrange for a few days of home leave at the same time, and the Andersons were invited to a small party with them and a few of their own old friends from the village. Once again, Burns and all his works turned out to be an interest they had in common, rather to the bewilderment of the other guests. Dr White told them about the reincarnation of John Anderson, and what an exceptionally nice boy he was. "And the other half of the pair is an equally nice young woman" said Mrs White. It all led to them gathering round the piano, and the Whites' daughter digging out a copy of the song, with its music, for her to accompany her mother's singing. It was that of an elderly lady, but remarkably good, and as Mr Anderson said on the way home, just what the part called for. "I wish", he added, "that John and Alison had been here; they could have contributed a song or two – and Ann's music seems to be coming along as well".

At Christmas they made their way to Kirkton, as promised. Mr Anderson said the trains were now really awful. He wasn't looking forward to the return trip, and thought they might cancel the Easter plan – and in fact they

did so. Those left in Kirkton joked that he was just dodging the garden work, but he said that even if he had come he would only have been found in the garden snoozing in a deck chair. Mrs Anderson said that while she had a much easier life, she too would appreciate having their few days off doing nothing in particular, in Surrey, which was always at its best in the spring, with oceans of daffodils in all the gardens.

When Ann and Alison and John arrived in the summer of 1943, Ann wanted to tell them all about her plans for the senior school, and Alison announced that she had enrolled at Atholl Crescent. The Andersons thought this was an excellent idea, although they were not told at that time about Alison's post-war planning. John, for once, had relatively little to say to his parents, although he had a long and earnest discussion with Dr White at the first opportunity. He mentioned his old teacher, Miss Scott, in connection with his growing attraction to historical studies, and to his surprise the old man said he knew of her. He had read a notice of something she had written about Dante's sources of knowledge about the corrupt papacy of his time, and he would try to get hold of the original.

He was as good as his word, and John read the paper with great interest. Dr White pointed out that he had editions of the *Divina Commedia* both in the original and in translation. He got down the translation, and looked up the passages in which the most wicked of the popes get their due in the next world. John said he really must get down to reading the whole work. He almost felt he owed it to Miss Scott – *Doctor* Scott, he corrected himself – who had tried

to interest him in it long ago. Dr White asked if he would be back next summer, and when John said, probably not, recommended that he should read the translation now, and leave the difficult task of working through the Italian until some future time. Although, he said, no translation can ever do it justice.

Their discussion turned to the question of what were the most interesting periods to study. Dr White said that if he had to chose one it would almost inevitably be the Reformation. His professional life had revolved around it, although he said – and this really did surprise John – he often wondered now if the whole thing had just been a mistake, or had gone wildly wrong. A thorough reformation inside a reunited catholic church would have been so much wiser.

As far as John was concerned, he thought the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries offered perennial scope for studying the history of ideas. He also pointed out that nothing in history is without antecedants, and you often have to seek them very far back, in classical Greece, or Egypt, or even Babylonia. For your own chosen period the rule is to go to the original documents as far as is humanly possible, but if you go further back you have to depend on what other people have dug up – often literally dug! Some of this was old hat to John, but he did find Dr White particularly convincing, and several of his illustrative examples were unusually interesting.

Elizabeth and Philippe had both graduated, and were now going up in the world. After another summer in Kirkton she was to start teaching in an Edinburgh elementary school when the new school year began, and he was to join the

permanent staff of the university, with the remark to Elizabeth that it would only be as permanent as the war! On the strength of their combined income they found an up-market flat in the Bruntsfield area and obtained a mortgage for it, with professional advice from Elizabeth's father. This fitted in nicely with Alison's plans, as she was able to take over their old arrangement with Elizabeth's aunt and uncle. When the weather was good she reckoned she could walk to Atholl Crescent, and when it wasn't, the trams were quite convenient.

Just before the end of the 1943 summer holidays news came through of the allied invasion of Sicily, and once again no news of Jim was taken to be good news. But then, later that year, there was word of the expected next move, into mainland Italy, and this time the blow fell. There was a message to say that Jim had been wounded in the first wave of the landings, but that his life was not in danger, and that he was being evacuated to an army hospital.

As it emerged later, he had been leading a small group of commandos, whose mission was to put an enemy gun position out of action. He had been struck by a burst of machine-gun fire, but ordered his men to leave him and to go on with their attack. He said the first wave of infantry was close behind and they would look after him. By the time they got there, he had lost a lot of blood and was unconscious, but they had managed to get him to a first-aid post, and from there, in stages, he had reached a hospital ship. For this action, putting his life at extra risk, he was "mentioned in despatches". His father said it was better than the award of a posthumous VC.

About three weeks later they had a letter written by a nursing sister in the hospital in Alexandria. Mrs Stewart said she could picture the scene all too clearly – a young nurse somehow finding time to sit by Jim and asking him what she was to write to his family. Very little of it made any claim to being his own words. The information was that he had multiple injuries and was still very weak, but that “miraculously”, none of his vital organs had been seriously injured, and he had no amputations, so that fairly soon he would be sent to England whenever there was a place for him on one of the hospital ships. They would get further information as soon as he reached a hospital, and she thought it wouldn’t be all that long before he would be classed as convalescent. It was nearly a month later that they were informed that he was in a hospital near Southampton, and were asked to come to see him there as soon as possible.

The message was delivered to their flat, so Mrs Anderson didn’t receive it until she came back from work, but she then made the necessary phone calls, packed some essentials, and left on the next train for London. She and Mr Anderson didn’t arrive at the hospital until late in the evening. The night sister had just come on duty, and she said they could come and look, but their son was sleeping and they mustn’t wake him. They could come back any time in the morning – seven o’clock if they wanted to. So they looked, and thought he seemed much like his usual self. But the nurse said he still had some injuries that hadn’t completely healed and that he would probably be kept in hospital for another few weeks. After that he could be taken by ambulance either to a centre for convalescents, or to any



address he wanted. They could talk to a doctor in the morning. The hotels were almost certainly all full, but there was a YMCA hostel that would probably take them in. She could phone and ask. She did so and they could.

The doctor told them that they might not think so, but their son was an extraordinarily lucky young man, and would get back to something like normal health in a matter of months. Bits of his guts had had to be stitched up in Alexandria, and they might always give him some trouble, but all his organs were in working order. He had had flesh wounds in all four limbs, which had caused the loss of blood that nearly killed him, and damage to the nerves might also bother him later, but he hadn't broken any bones, and most luckily of all, he had had no head injuries.

From what the doctor had heard, Jim's action in battle had been that of a real hero, and must have saved lives by allowing his group's mission to be accomplished. The nurses had told him that Jim was beginning to complain now, and that was always a good sign. Would they please just stay for a short time, and try to cheer him up. He estimated that another two weeks would be about enough to have the patient fit to be moved, but probably he should go to another hospital, wherever it would be convenient, rather than to a convalescent place, just yet.

This was on a Wednesday, so they decided they would phone and arrange to take the rest of the week off, try to think out a plan of further action, and come back to the hospital that evening. First they went in to see Jim. He raised a rather wan smile, and said he was sorry they found him in this state. He wasn't allowed to get up yet, but the doctor

said he soon would be, and he could already use his arms fairly well – could probably have written to them in fact, but there hadn't been much point, as he knew they would be coming.

His mother told him she had written to Marjory, who was not far away, in Portsmouth, and might quite likely be able to come in and see him. "To view the wreckage, I suppose", he said, but they told him it wasn't like that. Marjory was a very nice girl and she must be concerned about him. He asked about what the doctor had said. Was he really going to recover completely? They assured him that as far as they knew he would be back to normal life in a few months, and that they were wondering where he should ask to be sent next. They would have liked it to be near where they were, but Edinburgh might be a more practical choice. He said that would be OK as far as he was concerned. Just at the moment one hospital was as good as another, and he realized it would be easier for the people in Scotland to come and visit him than it would be for them.

They managed to find a room in a small hotel by getting there early in the day, when people were checking out, and for the rest of their stay they visited twice a day, and whiled away the time in Southampton as best they could. They told Jim they would be back the following weekend, and his father thought he might also manage to take time off in mid-week and make a day trip to Southampton. In the event he had a phone call from Marjory, and arranged that she would go on the Tuesday and he on the Thursday, and she said that unless anything prevented her they could probably repeat this the following week.

After her first visit Marjory wrote a letter to Mrs Anderson. She said they had had no serious conversation about the future, but she thought her visit had been welcome. She went again several times before he left Southampton and after the last one she wrote again to say that they had agreed she should continue in the Wrens until the war was over – she didn't have much choice unless they got married, which they didn't want to do, not yet, anyway. And then they would see.

The Andersons spent their short Christmas holiday in Southampton. Jim was able to sit up quite soon, and before he was taken off to Edinburgh he could get up and sit in a wheel chair, which they took into a communal sitting room. The winter weather meant he didn't go out of doors.

When they spoke to his doctor for the last time it was explained that the long journey would be made in two stages, with a break of at least two days in an army hospital in Yorkshire, and that there might be delays until transport onwards was available. There was a place for him in a hospital on the outskirts of Edinburgh, but it shouldn't be long until he could be released to one of the convalescent centres there. As it turned out, he had a month in the same one that Philippe had been in, and then he demanded to go to Kirkton, where Mrs Stewart would look after him. He was discharged from the army, and advised to take on some light work until he was properly fit. He was also told that he qualified for any university course of his choice, free of charge and with a small grant to cover his living expenses. He should be able to start in October of that year, 1944.

### **Pillow talk**

*The great thing for us is that the uncertainty is over.*

*Yes, it was waiting every day to see if it would bring bad news that was such a worry.*

*Do you think he will ever be really physically fit again?*

*Probably not a hundred percent, but ninety something, and that's a lot better than being planted in some war-graves cemetery.*

*Which university is he aiming for? And what subject?*

*I suppose it will be Edinburgh. As to the subject, you know as much as I do, and that's nothing at all. He never was very communicative. Mary probably knows more about him now than we do.*

*She's been the best friend we ever had. John worships her, which is an unusual relationship to have with your prospective mother-in-law.*

*And what about him? There has been a most unusual silence about what he intends to do when he leaves school.*

# John and the British army

I DISCOVERED that if I continued at Atholl Crescent for a second year and continued to pass all my exams, I wouldn't be called up, and I would end up with a much more impressive diploma, so that is what I arranged to do. When I went home for the summer, I found that John had been declared dux of the Academy, an honour that he bore lightly, although in fact it was his due reward for having completed a gruelling six years of study, and in Scotland at least it looked good on his cv ever afterwards.

I knew, of course, that his eighteenth birthday had fallen just before the end of the school year, and I couldn't understand why he had never said anything about his call-up. He had seemingly not said anything to anyone else either. He put on a big smile – in fact I am sure that it had all been his idea of a big tease. “Oh, that”, he said, “I've seen to it all. When I got the papers they told me to report to the

barracks in Perth, and I did. I explained that I was very nearly due to finish at school, so they've given me a date next week to report for duty". "Just like that?" I asked in disbelief, "what kind of duty?". "The usual stuff, I suppose", he answered, "square bashing, spit and polish, the 'naming of parts' of my rifle, etcetera". "You mean, you're just going into the infantry, as a private?". "And why not?" he asked.

It took me a long time to get him to admit that this move had been made as the outcome of his normal analytical approach to life's little problems. "If I do it this way", he said, "just work out for yourself what is going to happen. I'll make a bet with you that by the time I have finished the initial training they will have picked me out for some 'cushie' job, and greatly increased my chances of survival. I have no heroic ambitions at all. See what happened to Jim. One hero is enough in any family".

"It seems like a risky sort of gamble", I said, "and it's certainly not something I am going to make a bet on". But of course he was right, as he so often is, and by the time his unit was sent to France, he had a desk job, working very hard, at all hours, but in relative safety, well behind the lines. And, as he said, nothing on his conscience about "cowardice" or any such nonsense. I don't think he ever admitted to his father what he had been up to, and who knows, both his parents might have agreed that it was perfectly sensible to want to survive.

Alastair and George also just joined up as privates in the army, after they had spent most of their eighteenth years

doing unskilled but quite well paid jobs in Kirkton. However, they had none of John's confidence that favoured treatment would come their way, and none did. They managed to get into the same unit, and served together for the rest of the war. They did take part in front-line fighting, but survived unscathed. After the war, both said they had no desire to go back to any kind of academic education, but sought advice on good careers to get into. In those days that could still mean signing on as apprentices and attending night school classes in technical skills, which was what they did, and in the end they prospered as partners in a small building firm of their own. I still keep in touch with them and their expanding families after all these years.

Ann had gone off for another summer in Surrey, and had taken Maggie with her. Maggie's mother had been against it, but her father had said she was nearly sixteen and really very capable of looking after herself, and anyway, Ann was a sensible girl. We were soon getting reports that the two of them were spending a great deal of their time with Mrs White, who insisted that, far from causing her any trouble, they were being a great help. She was getting old, she said, and to have two such girls around was just what she needed – especially as there were no housemaids to be found, and she had a lot of things to do for the church.

Paris was liberated that August, so Philippe and Elizabeth precipitately – as it seemed to me, but it was understandable enough – handed in their notices to the

university and the education authority, enlisted her father to dispose of all but their most portable possessions, and put the flat up for sale. With some use of Philippe's father's influence, they got across to France as soon as they could and, according to Elizabeth's letters, had a great reception from his family.

Even before they left Scotland, we had received our first news from Fontainebleau, and began to wonder how soon it would be before we got back there again. And now we could think also of visiting Elizabeth and Philippe.

My grandmother Campbell died that November. My two Campbell uncles turned up. It was the only time I ever met them, and their contact with my mother and me was limited to a minimum of formal politeness and the exchange of news about how the war was affecting us, especially my three cousins now in France and the fourth, still a prisoner in Germany. They came from and went back to Glasgow the same day. There were not many other people at her funeral, just my parents and me, Mr and Mrs Forbes, Mrs Ramsay, and a few of our neighbours who had got to know her slightly. It was the first funeral I had been to, and it was not a particularly sad one. My granny had been in poor health for several months and her death was expected. We all thought she had had a good life, although after my grandfather died she seemed to lose interest in most things, and she found her very quiet time with us in Kirkton a poor substitute for what she had been used to in Argyll. Her will simply left everything to my mother, as we had been told it would.



I didn't see John at all until he was given pre-embarkation leave, when I dropped everything at Atholl Crescent and rushed off to Kirkton to be with him for a few days. He told me it was not at all like Jim's departure. The war was now in its final stage, so he would soon be back. As it turned out there was a dodgy period between VE and VJ days, when we worried that he might be sent to the far east, but he was never sent, and he was demobbed soon afterwards.

And here he was, "butter-side up" as his father put it, ready to enter university *and* get all his expenses paid. But what were we to do to keep us together, my Jo and me?

# Readjustments

**T**HERE WAS no way that life could revert to what it had been in 1939. Not only were the survivors six years older, but the whole world had changed irreversibly. Most of it was much poorer, and this certainly applied to Britain, which had poured out the accumulated wealth of centuries, already depleted by the previous war. At first the cause had been clear; it was to resist Naziism. Later the war had seemed to take on a life of its own, and the propaganda had been more concerned with supporting allies – including what in the recent past would have been the wildly improbable USSR – than with freeing Europe. However all that might be, the general outlook of the three families of this story was that they neither expected nor wanted to switch back to where they had been.

If anybody expected rationing to be cancelled immediately, they were to be deeply disappointed. For several more years it was worse for some items than it had been during the war. Exports, especially if they brought in dollars, had to be

given priority over domestic consumption. Luxuries like foreign travel were placed under severe restrictions.

The Stewart business would certainly have to readjust, but having come to specialize in the wholesale supply of materials for service uniforms, it never dropped that line; rather it came to regard it as a third division, along with retailing, in which it acquired more shops, and with dealing in ordinary “civilian” textiles, in which it made a beginning in the mail-order trade (nowadays greatly expanded by the “Web”). The company was a different animal, the Stewart brothers said, from either of the businesses they had known when they were young.

Mr Forbes had no wish to return to London. He said that with his family all grown up he had no real need to strive for promotion. He had got to like Kirkton and thought he would very likely end his days there. Mr Anderson, on the other hand, would be pleased to move to Edinburgh, which he loved, as its devotees tend to do, very quietly, in their Edinburgh way. To be given a more senior job there would be, as he told his wife, the icing on the cake.

Mrs Anderson was the first to be affected. Within days of the cessation of hostilities in Europe, the German-speaking staff were drastically thinned out and Russian language experts, who had been dispersed in other nooks and crannies of the system, moved in, evidently in accordance with some long-planned scheme. As a senior member of the staff, she stayed on a little longer, but before VJ day she had already received a letter thanking her for her valuable wartime contribution, and telling her that her services were no longer required. As she had “only” been there for less than seven

years she was not eligible for a pension, but would be receiving an *ex gratia* payment, the amount of which would soon be decided.

Soon after that, the bank made Mr Anderson an offer which, as he pointed out to his wife, would nearly restore their joint income to what it had been, and surely they could live economically, and with no need to commute, in some agreeable district of Edinburgh. A replacement was found for him in London, and soon he and his wife were able to leave for the north. Their main regret was having to say goodbye to the Whites, but Dr White said that he and his wife were going to retire soon to somewhere very near the Scottish border. He hoped they would keep in touch, and said that the teenagers in particular would always be very welcome visitors. Mr Anderson said that one of his first moves would be to get his car off its blocks and to have it put in good running order, so that visits from Edinburgh should be very easy.

The last of our school pupils of this generation were Ann and Maggie, who faced separation, one in Kirkton and the other in Edinburgh. Whether their next move was actually designed to keep them together, or was really what both would have chosen independently, was a matter for speculation among their siblings, but it was probably a good choice anyway. They managed to gain entry to the Edinburgh College of Art, to study “design”, with the intention of concentrating on everything to do with textiles and their use in embroidery and related arts. But they did also take an intelligent interest in things like stained glass, furniture, and even pottery. The Andersons said that

Maggie, with her reputation for being helpful around the house, was welcome to share Ann's room. And they spent some of their vacations together in Kirkton.

Mr Forbes bought the Anderson house there at the price set by an independent surveyor. He had been building up a fund for that very purpose, starting with what he had received when he sold his London one, while Mr and Mrs Anderson, likewise, had accumulated most of the extra money they would need to spend on an Edinburgh house. They sorted out the furniture, bringing the Forbes' things in from storage and moving the Andersons' ones to Edinburgh.

Alastair and George were demobbed quite early, and went home, at least until they could work out what they were going to do. Marjory spent a short time in Singapore after it was again under British rule, and was then sent to Portsmouth to be discharged. When she arrived home she reckoned that she was the last bit of the Anderson-Forbes-Stewart jigsaw to be in its proper place.

### **Pillow talk**

*We've done ourselves proud. I hope we could really afford it. At least we've only had to get a very small mortgage.*

*I was very keen to have a place with its own garage. There aren't that many in Edinburgh. The good Edwardian houses went up just before cars became common, and there were only a very few people who kept a horse-drawn vehicle of any kind. This one must have benefited from having a bit of space where they could add the garage later on.*

*What's Jim going to do? He and Marjory seem friendly enough – far more than they ever were at school. I doubt if he can get much of a job, at least until he's fit again, if he's ever going to be.*

*What is he good at? Apart from playing Rugby, which he can't any more, and being a war hero, there isn't much to go on, although he always seems intelligent enough. I can't get much out of him. Maybe you should try.*

*More likely Marjory than me, I think.*

## Decision

WE WERE NOW nineteen, and we had arrived at the same conclusion at the same time. We were in my parents' house, on a beautiful evening in mid September, with a full moon making it almost like daylight. John proposed going for a stroll down by the river, just outside the town, a favourite spot of his. He was always a one to do things the proper way, and he asked me very formally if I would marry him. "You do mean now, I hope" was all I could think to say, and he said "Not quite this minute, but just as soon as we can arrange it".

On the way home, we began to discuss the practicalities. He said he wanted to begin "a lifetime of scholarly studies" with an MA course, concentrating on "modern" history, which he explained only meant "not ancient". He thought it would actually simplify things if he entered it right from the start as a married student. Plenty of other ex-servicemen were doing this. He was torn between Edinburgh and Oxford, and before he made up his mind he was going to visit Dr Scott and get her views on that point, having already heard those of Dr White. He was

going back to Edinburgh the next day, and I could come with him if I liked, and we could call on Dr Scott together. Actually, he had an idea for a longer-term possibility, to take an MA at one of these two universities and then try to get a doctor's degree at the other one. I said "That really is long-term planning", but he said he thought it was realistic, and in any case need only be seen as one possible outcome, at this stage.

Just for this evening, however, we thought we had better concentrate on the wedding itself. The very first thing would be to tell our parents. My mother's reaction was the most important one for me, in more ways than one. She was obviously pleased, as she had been one of John's greatest fans ever since she had first encountered him, and I suspect had even felt an extra little sentimental bond, in that they both had names that connected them to Robert Burns.

Her first thought was to tell me that her side of the financial part had all been thought out, and only needed a visit to the family lawyer to get it formally arranged. She was going to give me a large part of what she regarded as my inheritance, now. My father intervened to say that he wasn't proposing any change in the company's affairs so long as he was still active. He thought it would probably continue much as it now was, and that as far as I was concerned in the future I could regard it mainly as a source of income. There was no point in setting me up with any of it now, as any payments to me would be taxed at nineteen



shillings and sixpence in the pound, whereas if we left things alone it could be ploughed back into the company.

My mother was evidently beginning to think that this was all far too much about money, and said that she expected we had our own ideas about children, but as far as she was concerned her first grandchild couldn't come too soon – and be followed by a few more! Which was just what I had been thinking too, and it seemed most unlikely that John would see it differently.

We explained that we were off to Edinburgh in the morning. We said it was mainly to tell John's parents, although that wasn't strictly true, as he had already planned to visit Dr Scott before he proposed to me. But obviously it had become an additional reason for going, and for me to accompany him. Mr Anderson came home for lunch, so all the family were there, and everybody seemed pleased. Ann said she hoped it would be a "proper" wedding, and I said I hoped so too, and that she and Maggie could be my bridesmaids. Mr Anderson asked about what we expected to be doing in the immediate future, and John said he had left it a bit late, but he was going to start by trying to get entry to a university on an MA course, and that he had an appointment with Dr Scott to discuss it that very afternoon. His father said he supposed money was no problem. The taxpayer would be supporting us, and anyway John was marrying for money. I thought this was an unfortunate joke, and said rather sharply that I thought he had things the wrong way round. I was marrying

John for his brains, and his great prospects. “Aye” he said “I ken fine”. You could say he won that round. The simple truth, however, was that neither John nor I needed any reasons.

After lunch we went to see Dr Scott at the university. She had no office of her own, but ushered us into the staff common room, which was otherwise almost empty. John told her he had managed to work a very prompt discharge from the army, having been, he said, the man in control of the paperwork involved. This raised a smile, and she positively beamed on us when he went on to say that we had just got engaged. “Don’t forget my invitation to the wedding”, she said, and John gallantly replied that she was at the top of the list – not, I reflected, that any kind of list even existed.

He then explained that he intended to take up the offer of a university course, on the scheme for supporting ex-service people. She assumed that he meant Edinburgh, and said that he was cutting it a bit fine, but that the Arts Faculty was pretty flexible about class numbers, and if he got his application in now he would probably be accepted. John explained about his earlier discussion with Dr White, and the possibility of it being Oxford, and that he was even hatching a long-term plan to make it both, one after the other. She said she could talk all afternoon about the relative merits of any of these ideas, but quite honestly, she said, she recommended getting into Edinburgh now, if in fact it was still possible. She said she could see two

main reasons. One: he had been through the Scottish school system, and the schools and universities meshed with each other. It was quite possible to cross over, between Scotland and England, and plenty of people did it, but it was an added difficulty, and often meant, either way, that you got off to a bad start in your first year. Two: the Edinburgh History Department was on the up and up right now, after a long period of having been relatively mediocre. “And I don’t just mean they’ve got me”, she said, jokingly.

As for a doctorate, she said, “Leave that until you know more about it. Edinburgh and Oxford aren’t the only universities in the world”. She was sure things were becoming ever more international, and it was quite possible he would want to go on to somewhere on the Continent, the USA, Canada, or wherever. She herself, as he knew, had studied partly in Italy and, she thought, had benefited greatly from doing so. Strangely, as it must seem to people nowadays, John hadn’t really thought of this point, and his ideas on choosing a university had reached no further than the Scottish ones, or just possibly Cambridge, or maybe even Durham, but the two obvious choices had always seemed to be Edinburgh and Oxford. He said that he too had been turning over all the arguments he could think of, but that she had convinced him. Edinburgh it would be.

“What do I have to do now?” he asked with rather more than his usual disingenuousness, and got the answer that he was aiming for – and very likely had been working towards, I thought, even before he had arranged this

meeting. "If you like", she said, "I'll take you along to the man who deals with enrolments".

They found that he was free to see them, having, as he thought, dealt with all the usual last-minute rush already. Dr Scott, however, no newcomer to such negotiations herself, soon got him to admit that in the Arts Faculty it was never really too late, and that as it happened, he had just received someone's letter withdrawing his application. They went over John's school results, which clearly impressed him, capped as they were by the magic word "dux" at a good school, and also asked about the brief army career, over which, however, he did not linger. John filled in a form, and was told that he would get written confirmation, but that it was as good as done, and he should make an appointment as soon as he could, with the "Reader" in History who dealt with such things, to discuss his first-year options.

Before they parted from her, John arranged a further meeting with Dr Scott, to get her ideas on these options. He knew enough about Edinburgh's way of doing things to realize that he would have to include subjects well outside the kinds of history he was hoping to concentrate on. But he saw this, on the whole, as an advantage over the narrower specialization of Oxford. He prided himself on having wide interests. And perhaps he was unaware that at Oxford you can attend lectures on just about anything under the sun, even if it doesn't help you to get you your degree.

We agreed that he should stay in Edinburgh and deal with the university, and also try to work out what we had best do about accommodation – we could keep in touch about that by phone, and I would return to Kirkton and make arrangements for the wedding. I would have to begin by recording our intentions at the registrar's, and if it was to be a church wedding we would also have to get the banns published. "You know what I think about all that", he said, "If I were you, I would simply do whatever will keep your mother happy". And then he reminded me that in a way, we owed everything to the church in Kirkton. We had first met at their Sunday school !

I said I thought that if I pushed for it we could just squeeze a wedding in before the university year commenced, but that a proper honeymoon would have to wait. "I have an idea about that", he said, "we can make it a holiday in France at Easter. We can even fiddle the currency with some help from Elizabeth". This last remark slightly shocked me, coming as it did from a banker's son, but I was beginning to absorb the new general attitude that all these regulations had been fair enough in wartime, but what we needed, and thought we had earned, was freedom. Moreover, it was widely said that "the new rich" were doing what they liked with the currency, and why shouldn't we honest citizens bend the rules if we could. It was obvious enough that for anyone like us, with family or close friends on the other side of the Channel, and travel going on both ways, it was very easy.

My father stepped in to say that I was his only daughter, and he could well afford to see me married in style, so if my mother and I could see to the ceremony he would attend to the reception. He would try to hire the church hall, which he succeeded in doing, and persuaded a firm of caterers in Edinburgh to provide the food and drink, and even a wedding cake, although they said that would stretch their resources to the limit, and they couldn't guarantee that it was fully up to their pre-war standard. As for dresses for me and my bridesmaids, if he couldn't provide the materials, nobody could, and we had an excellent dressmaker in the town. I persuaded John on the phone to get himself a new suit, even if he had to beg, borrow or steal the coupons.

So in the end we made quite a splash. The ceremony was in the church. My mother talked the minister into agreeing to it, but she got a lecture on people who only wanted the church for baptisms, weddings and funerals. This would have been fair enough if it had been directed at John or me, but she thought it wasn't really fair on her, as she and my father were still communicant members of his congregation. "A nice point", John commented. It was the first such wedding Kirkton had seen for a very long time, and was reported with pictures even in the Edinburgh newspapers. We did what Elizabeth and Philippe had done, knowing that our "real" honeymoon would follow next year, and escaped to the posh hotel up the main road to the north – in fact John's father drove us there, and said

we could find our own way back to Kirkton, or Edinburgh, whenever it suited us best.

John and I never talked much about sex even between ourselves. “Action, not words” was his motto, he boasted, which seemed a slightly odd thing to say after our long abstinence, but we agreed that it had been worth the wait. “And we’ll recommend it to our children” I said, which rather brought him down to earth, as it was meant to. Fortunately, perhaps, the expected arrival of the first one was not apparent to all the world until we got home from France, after Easter.

I hadn’t taken it in when I had been shown over the main part of the house, but the new Anderson residence included what was now being referred to as a “granny flat”. It had a smallish bedroom, a bathroom and a combined kitchen/dining-room/sitting-room. It seemed to provide all we needed for the time being, and would cost us nothing – a rather mean thought when we could well afford to pay, but John said we could make it up to his parents some other way. And we really did do so rather a long time later. We set them up in modest luxury for their retirement, when they sold the big Edinburgh house and invested the proceeds to provide themselves with comfortable pensions. But that is jumping much too far ahead.

I asked if I could move my piano from Kirkton and put it in their sitting room, but Mr Anderson said I should leave it where it was. He would get one for Ann – maybe I could advise him about it – and I could share it with her.

## The news from France

**E**LIZABETH, ON HER own admission, was not a very good correspondent, and mostly only wrote to her mother and father. She always addressed them jointly, but very often, her father thought, it was with her mother in mind. It seemed natural enough in a girl, although it didn't always work that way – he was thinking of young Ann and *her* father.

When she first arrived at the Dumont family home in central France, she had two main impressions, first, the sheer scale of it all – it wasn't just a chateau, but a whole estate, with a working farm and a well managed, productive forest, and second, what nice and interesting people she had acquired as parents-in-law. Her letters home reflected the relative importance to her of these two things. She almost managed to be casual about the first, but went on at much more length about the second. She almost wished in fact that she was writing to Mr Anderson, as she knew that he would have understood her better, and been more interested in her comments on French social life, than her own



parents. Perhaps she would try writing to him some day. At least, the next time they met, she would have a lot to talk about, much more than she had ever had before.

Philippe was doing his best to explain it all to her, she told them, but he had advised her not even to try to make sense of French politics. Just “cultivate your garden” he had said, and at least she knew where *that* came from. His family was a prominent protestant one, but just how they had survived the famous Revocation of the Edict of Nantes he wasn’t even very sure himself. Now they represented a minor strand in French cultural life, verging on the puritanical and abstemious, producing scholars, politicians and lawyers, fiercely proud of their incorruptibility.

She had tried to speak to his parents in French, but M. Dumont had said she would have ample opportunities with other people. He and his wife both had fluent English, and liked to practice it and keep it up to date. He had always been an Anglophile, and had taken a scholarly interest in the French connection with Scotland in the sixteenth century – perhaps he was really more Scotophile than Anglophile. She would find, however, that many other French people had never even heard of the “auld alliance”.

He had also interested himself in the Jacobites. He thought this matter was a good illustration of the differences between France and Great Britain. In France there were still people with thoughts, however fanciful they might be, of restoring the Bourbons, or the Orleans line, or the Bonapartes, or the various factions of revolutionary times. In Britain, or at least in Scotland, people still sang the old Jacobite songs, and anyone who bore the name of Stewart, like their friends,

might be a “sentimental Jacobite,” but hardly anybody even knew that there was an official Stewart Jacobite organization, and fewer still could name its current candidate for the throne. He had been told that the one referred to as “the pretender”, an obscure Bavarian “aristo”, didn’t even claim it himself. You could say, he didn’t even pretend.

Or, he said, take the famous Dreyfus affair. Most educated British people think they know about it. He was framed by the anti-Semitic, right-wing military, and spent years on Devil’s Island. His case was taken up by Zola, who wrote a pamphlet remembered for the phrase “*J’accuse*”, and had to flee to London for protection. Dreyfus was exonerated and released. End of story. But in France it was far from being any such thing. There is still a sizeable, influential body, he said, mostly Catholic, mostly on the far right, many with military connections, and all of them anti-Semites, who insist that Dreyfus had been a dangerous traitor.

He and his wife were really pleased, he said, that their only son had married a Scottish girl. Philippe had told them about how they had first met, how it had been “love at first sight”, and how well she had looked after him. “And now”, they said, “you are going to give us our first grandchild, and he will represent the old alliance”. Elizabeth claimed that it was superb family planning. On D-day they had worked out just how long it would be before they could get “home”, as Philippe naturally thought of it, for the baby to be born there, and had got it just about right. When “it” arrived it was a “he”, and that pleased the the Dumonts still more. There was much discussion about his name. Elizabeth said that in Scotland it was common to give the

oldest son his paternal grandfather's Christian name, and to add his mother's surname as a middle one, and this seemed to please everybody, so he was baptized, in the simple French protestant way, as Jean-Paul Forbes Dumont. Every post seemed to bring him another present, some from Scotland, and some from various corners of France. John and Alison were already expected at Easter, and his other grandparents said they would be also be there, to inspect him, sometime in the spring. And they hoped that Philippe and Elizabeth would come to Scotland in the summer, to show him around.

Philippe's father said there was no need for him to go looking for a job. There was plenty for him to do to help manage the estate, and he himself wanted to spend more time with his books. He was thinking of writing one himself – something, he thought, about the history of the protestants who had hung on in France. Elizabeth pricked up her ears when she heard this, and told him that she was sure that John would be interested.

As for Elizabeth herself, she said there was nothing she could imagine that would be better than this rural life, but she hoped she could be given some specific duties to justify her existence. This drew the immediate reply that if she felt up to it, there was a very big job she could certainly do, which was to arrange and catalogue the library, which was in great disorder. It contained many valuable old books, quite a lot of them in English. She said she thought she had almost enough experience of libraries to know how to set about it, and she would try to get hold of more information that would help. She would have to set up card indexes of

some kind. She would aim to do it the French way, whatever that was exactly, and maybe when the baby was a little older Philippe could take her to Paris and introduce her to one of the university libraries there, and they could shop for the things she would need for her indexing.

He said “and I can show you our flat in town”, which took her by surprise. No one had mentioned it, and she didn’t know there was such a thing. Philippe said he thought it had been rather neglected during the war years, and it might be a good idea if they spent some time there, to see that it was put in good order. “We do have a caretaker”, he said, “but he’s getting old”. Elizabeth remarked that wonders would never cease, and asked if he had any more such secrets – a little place of their own somewhere on the Côte d’Azur, perhaps? “No”, he said, “but that needn’t prevent us from having a holiday down there some time. Come to think of it, I did promise to show you some other parts of France, but this baby has put everything else out of my head”. “Well”, she said, “My mother always said it had been easiest to travel with me when I was very small, so let’s see what we can do. We can at least avoid the main holiday seasons”.

Mme Lesage and Mme Desmoulins exchanged letters with their counterparts in Scotland, it being tacitly agreed, seemingly, that this was womens’ work, but beyond the bare facts that Robert and Pauline were still unmarried, that Robert was at an engineering college, and Pauline studying languages, there wasn’t much news from the French side. The big news that Elizabeth was in France, and had a baby son, was of course passed on in some detail. Mme Lesage said the Dumont name was well enough known, but she

didn't know anything about this particular bit of the family. It did seem that Elizabeth had got into high society. Otherwise, everybody agreed that there was too much catching up for it all to be covered by letters. Sometime soon they ought to meet, and exchange their stories of how they had passed the war. John and Alison would begin, when they included Fontainebleau on their round of visits.

**Pillow talk**

*John and Alison seem to have got things sorted out.*

*Yes. I can't pretend that I like extravagant weddings, but that wasn't our concern.*

*At least it brightened Ann and Maggie's lives. And I quite enjoyed the party myself.*

*I think Alison really did like our wedding present after all. It seems a bit much for government regulations to say we can only have white china. But interference with our choice of wedding presents is nothing to what we get at the bank.*

*Actually, I think white Wedgwood is rather stylish. There were other bits of it in that George Street shop that I rather fancied myself.*

*Did John tell you they are hoping to have a delayed honeymoon in France? He was talking about fiddling the currency with Elizabeth. Can*

*you tell him to be more discreet. I don't want to talk about it, whatever I think myself.*

*They're even talking about children! I do hope they have a few. I don't think Mary's troubles were hereditary.*

*It all seems so odd, getting married just as you start at university, and proposing to have children in the middle of an MA course.*

*These are strange times. You'd better get used to it! At least it won't be Alison who is studying.*

*And what about Jim? That boy never stops being a worry, even when he is no longer in the war. Have you heard from Marjory?*

*Yes, and she's as much in the dark as we are.*

## My new role

I HAD TOLD John how I looked at the future – *my* future, I should say, but inextricably joined to his. It was to be wife and mother, amateur musician, and business woman. “Marriage, Music, and Money”, he had suggested. I reminded him of this when we moved into our little flat.

I said I didn’t have any great theories about male and female roles. Nature had certainly fixed one of the important facts. It was me that would have the babies – three or maybe four, I hoped. We needn’t take that into consideration right now, as nature had thoughtfully arranged for nine months’ warning.

Whatever applied to other people, it seemed clear to me that in our partnership, a lot would turn on him having a successful life as a scholar. That would benefit us both, and my part in it would be to support him and make sure that his home-life helped and didn’t hinder. I didn’t care if other people saw this as being an old-fashioned housewife. It didn’t mean subservience, but just a complementary role in the partnership. I would see that our home was as

comfortable and well looked after as I could, that his clothes were seen to, that we had good food and drink, and that when he wanted to entertain friends I would give them a proper welcome.

What did I expect in return? he asked. "The main thing is easy", I said, "I just want you to be my Jo! Apart from that, my idea is that you won't think of yourself as having any housekeeping to do, while I know very well that when I really need some help you'll always be there, just as you always have been for my mother – and my old granny, come to that. And if I sometimes have to leave you to fend for yourself, or for the children, I know you won't be the traditional helpless male. Remember that I've had my eye on you for ten years".

"The second item is music", I went on, "and whether anyone else in this house realized it or not, I've now had my come-uppance over the piano. Once, long ago, I got told off by my mother for being mean about sharing mine with Ann, and now I am to share hers! But anyway I hope that she and I can spend a fair amount of time on it, both separately and together, and that we can get you to sing for us. I expect you'll learn the old Edinburgh students' songs, especially those that are fit for Ann's young ears. There is a book with a collection of words and music; I'll get a copy the next time I'm near Thins. Do you know *Gaudeamus igitur*, at least? And come to think of it, we must look for a similar thing with the French ones, when we are in Paris at Easter. Did I tell you that Elizabeth says that Philippe's



family have a flat there that we can use, as well as staying as long as we like at the chateau? What it is to have rich friends! I don't think I can compete with your father in making preparations, but I must get down to making some sort of plan, and eventually train and ferry bookings. At least he must have all the maps we could want, and I'm sure he'll let us borrow them".

"And the third item is money, or business. I already have a lot, and I have the prospect of more. You have your grant from the government and free accommodation from your parents. I am sure that you will eventually get a good salary, although scholars aren't highly paid and don't get rich, unless they hit the jackpot with some semi-popular book. It will be good for your ego when you get a professorship, and it will make a worthwhile difference to our total income, but that could take ten years to reach, or even more. So in the meantime you just have to remember that we are in this together, and that what is mine is yours, even if the law no longer says so. And if it helps you can tell yourself that I have done nothing, so far at least, to merit being rich – it has all just fallen into my lap".

"The temptation would be to spend more now, but my idea is to hoard what we've got, and make it grow as far as we can in very safe investments. We can pay for anything we really need, and for the occasional treat, like our delayed honeymoon. You can have anything you want for your work, like books, and I would say, a good typewriter. Then slowly and methodically we can set about my

hotel idea. Your eventual earnings, and my income from the Stewart firm once it starts to come my way, should be our ultimate backstop, but even so we shouldn't rush into the hotel business, but just make sure each step is working before we go on to the next one. I should say, every step but the first one, which should be to build a much smaller house for us to live in up there, leaving the main building to be adapted as the core of the hotel. And at some stage we may have to find other accommodation wherever you have to live. This place will hardly do even if we go on living in Edinburgh, if we have children. And I've been thinking of Jim. If he got married, I think he would have a much better claim on the flat than we do".

John listened patiently to this outpouring of all that had been going on in my mind. I think he agreed with all or most of it. It was the very last bit, however, that caught his attention. "What's all this?" he asked, "do you know something about my big brother that I don't? – have you got something out of Marjory?" I said that it was almost entirely guesswork, but it seemed to me that Jim and Marjory were cooking something up, and it was a fair assumption that marriage must be at the centre of it. We would know soon enough.

## Jim and Marjory

**J**IM WAS IN Edinburgh, and Marjory was in Kirkton, neither of them with any “proper” occupation or any obvious prospect of one. The only thing that they both seemed to have decided on was not to go in for any further education – for which they would have qualified for grants. Marjory had had a few temporary unskilled jobs but, at least in Kirkton, nobody seemed to want a young chauffeuse, which was the one thing she could have done really well. She pored over the classified ads in the *Edinburgh Evening News*, and applied for various things she thought she could do, but without success, until her persistence was finally rewarded. A driving school in Edinburgh specifically wanted a female instructress, as they explained when she phoned them, because they thought (rightly or wrongly) that this would attract more female learners, who were now a large part of their clientele. They took her on for a trial period, on the strength of her record with the Wrens.

She had in any case been becoming a frequent visitor at the Anderson house, so they now gave her a bedroom of her own for an indefinite stay, and for the time being Jim stopped his visits the other way, to Kirkton. When her trial period was up, the school said that all her young women trainees had been very pleased with the way she had taught them. And the older women, if anything, had sung her praises even more. And to cap it all, they had made the discovery, which shouldn't really have surprised anyone, that she was in growing demand with young men wanting to learn, and was equally praised by them. So she had a very secure job.

One evening, when there was no one else around, she cornered Jim in the sitting room and told him she wanted to talk to him seriously, and would he please listen carefully. She reminded him of that far-off occasion at the school dance, and said the time had come to do something about it. She had had a "good war" in the Wrens and had met a lot of men, but had made no lasting attachment to any of them. She couldn't honestly say this was because she always had him in her mind, but maybe it had had something to do with it. So far as she knew, he had no girl friends at all, other than her (she was using the term with the "innocent" meaning that it had in those old days). They were both of an age to be thinking of getting married, and his young brother had beaten him to it. She was younger than Elizabeth, but found herself envious, not really of the fact that she had made such a good match, or even that she now had a boy child, but simply that she was a married woman, and it seemed to be a highly desirable state.

If she and Jim got married, people might say that it was a matter of sense rather than sensibility – as Elizabeth (and Philippe?) would almost certainly put it – but she was very fond of him, and where exactly the line was between that and great romantic love, who could say? She was as certain as anyone could be, that they could live happily together.

She would have just one condition. Jim must do *something* with his life. It wouldn't have to be a highly paid job, or even a "job" in the ordinary sense at all. There must be something he was good at, or liked doing.

Jim ignored all the well thought-out preliminaries – perhaps he simply accepted them all as obvious enough, and even reciprocated much the same thoughts. But he seized on the last part. "You remind me of my father, long ago", he said, "he once gave John and me a sort of lecture, and the bit that has stuck was the idea of doing something *creative*. You may not have noticed, but I've been doing nearly all the little jobs needed to get this old house in better shape, and I've discovered that I'm quite a good handiman. And it had already occurred to me that if I could think out how to set about it, I could learn to do some kind of craftwork. If I found some such occupation, would that do? I'm very fond of you too, and you've been my main support ever since you came home. My reason for existence, you could say".

"That sounds just right to me", she answered, relieved and somewhat surprised that it had all been so easy after all. "But there is one more thing to get straight. I am not going to marry you because of your wartime antics, or because of their consequences either. As far as I'm concerned you are a

*man*, quite fit enough for me, both physically and mentally, and apart from anything of that kind, I think you are like all your family, simply a good man, and sure to be a good husband and father, and if I have talked you into marriage I will have gained something priceless. Have I?”

“Yes”, he said. “I might have done better to do the asking. Ever since I was a teenager, I have never felt that I was quite the same as other men, and my experiences haven’t helped, but now you seem to have got me straightened out. My next move will be to see if my father can advise and assist on the practical issues. I’m sure he can and will. Can we say we’re engaged, at least? I still have some funds that we can use for a ring. Will you accept one?” “Yes”, she said, “that’s the best thing for now”.

Jim had in fact a lot more to talk about. He said he might seem very different from John, but he shared one thing with him that they had got from their father. They liked to sit and think things out. And that was just what he had been doing. She had spoken up at exactly the right time. He had gone over all sorts of ideas in his head, and he had hit upon one that he thought would at least be worth a try. He had always secretly envied Ann all her dolls’ things, and now he thought he could have a go at making toys like that – dolls’ houses and all their furniture. He hadn’t heard Alison’s remark about hotel keeping, but he unknowingly repeated it in almost exactly the same terms. He was sure he could do these things better than they were usually done. And he thought that a work-place, tools and materials would require only a very small capital. He would ask his father about that.

Marjory had learned some practical applied psychology in the forces, so she voiced no doubts at all – and in any case she thought it *was* a promising idea, so she greeted it with great enthusiasm. The thing to aim for, she said, would be the very top end of the market. Jim Anderson's dolls' houses and their furnishings would be the best ever. "You sound just like my father", he said, "his quotation was 'do it with thy might'".

They found Mr Anderson in his dark-room. It had been given a high priority in refurbishing the house, and he spent much of his spare time in it. The red light was not on, and the door was unlocked, so they went in. He was all ready to show them his work in progress, but Jim got a word in to say they had something to talk about. However, when he told his father, first, that he and Marjory were engaged, and second, that he had had this idea for getting into arts and crafts, he got only brief but warm congratulations for the first part, and the reply to the second one was that it required a family conference, which would have to be the next day, a Saturday, after lunch. Then they had to look at his latest pictures.

### **Pillow talk**

*So that's the Jim and Marjory story. I should have had more confidence in them, that they would think of something.*

*I have some ideas. They involve Alison, and I'm not sure they are entirely fair to her and John, and maybe she'll reject them. But I think all I'm really asking for is some family solidarity. In the medium term they run to some ideas about accommodation, and in the short term there are some questions of finance, that may be more difficult. We'll see, tomorrow.*

*If you mean what I think you do about accommodation, you'll find there is no difficulty. Alison was chatting to me only yesterday and she said that she and John had talked about it, and agreed that if he ever needed it, Jim had a better claim on our granny flat than they had, and they could easily make other arrangements. In fact they will probably want to as soon our first grandchild makes his appearance.*

*It sounds to me as if you women were scheming it all out yourselves. But at least let me get a word in about money. That's the bit I'm really supposed to know about.*



## A business opportunity?

THE NEXT DAY we all ate together at lunch-time, Mr and Mrs Anderson, Jim, John, Ann, Marjory, and me. The Andersons had gone up in the world, and had spent all the war years in England, but they had decided to keep to their old ways, and have a proper “tea” at six o’clock on working days, and a light, easily prepared meal in the middle of the day, which they called “dinner”.

Ann said she would clear the table, and the rest of us went up to the living room. Mr Anderson said it was all about Jim and Marjory, and came in two parts, what they proposed to do about getting married, and what Jim was thinking about taking up. Obviously they would have their own ideas about the first part, in particular, but first Mrs Anderson had something to say about it that might help.

So she said it was about accommodation really. In her old-fashioned opinion, it would not do to have engaged people living in the same house for an indefinite period, so would they consider getting married as soon as could

be done? (She must have forgotten the day she let her hair down and confided in me about how “James” had spent his leaves in 1914-18. I didn’t say anything, of course). The bread-winner would be Marjory for the time being, but there was nothing wrong with that. Also for the time being, they could simply use Jim’s room – there was space enough in it for a double bed – and eat with them and Ann. Then later on, when everybody found it convenient, they could have the granny flat, and John and I could find somewhere else, as she had already discussed with me.

Marjory said she wouldn’t want to displace John and me, unless it really suited us to move, but otherwise she had nothing against this scheme. As to a wedding, it was entirely up to Jim to decide on its timing. All she had to say was that she just wanted it to be a very simple one. They had all greatly enjoyed John’s and mine, but their case seemed different somehow. She would like it if Elizabeth could come. It would be in Kirkton, of course, most likely in her parents’ house, as Elizabeth’s had been.

Jim said that on the contrary, he would do as he was told about the wedding, including its date. He just wanted to put a word in for Ann, if it was needed. She liked few things better than being a bridesmaid, with a nice new dress for the occasion.

So point one on the agenda was ticked off, and a date set, for soon after Easter. Marjory said she would ask her mother to see to the arrangements, as far as could be done, and would only ask for one week off work. She had

already told her parents she was officially engaged – “See what I’ve got,” she said, and displayed the pretty, if far from magnificent ring they had gone out to buy that forenoon. No doubt her mother would have passed the news on to the Stewarts, and I could give them the rest of the story.

Mr Anderson said perhaps he ought to have discussed the next point with me in advance, but I must feel free to say whatever I liked about it – nobody would be in the least put out if I turned his ideas down flat. In any case it wasn’t a cut and dried plan, and might be adapted in any of a number of ways. Also, it was something I would want to consult my parents about, before any definite decision was taken. Something about money, I thought to myself, and I’d bet that if I really did turn down his idea he wouldn’t be at all pleased. But let’s see what it is.

First, he asked Jim to explain what it was that he wanted to try, leaving out the financial aspects in the meantime. So Jim told us how he had thought about what he wanted to do, and had arrived first at the general field of craftwork, and then it had occurred to him that one thing he thought he could learn to do was to make toys, more specifically dolls’ houses and furniture, and he thought he had some ideas about making extra good ones. Marjory seemed to agree that it was a sound idea. He would need a small workshop, a few bits of basic equipment, and some materials. He would try to get training in woodwork, although the idea had first come to him when he had begun to realize that here and there he had already picked up skills that would be useful.

His father then explained *his* ideas. He was far from recommending any industrial-scale venture, but only a reasonable minimum investment to see if it would work. He agreed that one early move should be to see where Jim could get some proper training. Edinburgh had a big technical school that had a good reputation, and it didn't only operate as a day school, but had a variety of evening classes. Jim should make inquiries as soon as possible. They might be able to advise him on what would be the most useful equipment for small-scale work. He himself had seen an advertisement recently for what seemed to be just the thing – a whole range of miniature tools. He thought the town planners would make no difficulties over a “garden shed”, although if the venture prospered they might have to think of something else later. Altogether, the start-up capital needed should be in the hundreds of pounds, rather than thousands (remember that he was talking about 1946 money!).

Now, the family could easily support Jim and Marjory with board and lodging, and Marjory's pay would cover their other living expenses, but even a small amount of capital would be difficult just at this time. They were stretched to the limit – by his cautious standards at least – by this house and its renovation and furnishing, which were costing rather more than he had counted on. So could I do anything to help? He could think of different ways of doing it – one, obviously, would be a simple loan.

But it had occurred to him that I just might be interested in a different kind of arrangement, in effect to make it a

small part of the Stewart empire right from the start. It would be tiny as compared with everything else the company did, but great oaks from little acorns grow, and you never know, this just might end up as a fair sized tree. The loss if it all collapsed would be so small as to be hardly worth bothering about. In the meantime Jim would benefit from professional management and accounting, often the bugbear of one-man enterprises. Jim himself would of course have to accept that any such scheme would entail the loss of his independence.

I said that I personally would be very pleased to help Jim, and would certainly do so in one way or another, but obviously I would need to consult my father on this idea of a business plan, which had taken me by surprise, but seemed to me at least to be a possible, and even an interesting one. Stewart's had always been essentially a family business, and my brother-in-law should surely count as family. I knew that my father held Jim in high regard on account of his war service, and Marjory as well, for that matter, as someone with a lot of practical common sense. The immediate answer was simple enough. They should go ahead, and I would promise, right here and now, that I would lend them anything up to a thousand pounds of my own money, as it became necessary, and it could all be sorted out later according to what Jim and my father might – or might not – agree upon.

Jim thanked me, and said the offer of a loan, temporary or otherwise, was very generous, and would let him set things in motion. He would certainly be interested in what

my father had to say about his father's big idea. Marjory also thanked me, saying that she thought this offer would make all the difference. She was confident that Jim's plan would work out one way or another, and that I wouldn't ever have cause to regret having been such a help.

Almost immediately after this it was the Easter vacation, and John and I set off on our so-called delayed honeymoon. His father had generously offered to let us use his car, but I pointed out that neither of us could drive or had a licence, and that anyway I rather liked train travel. I couldn't imagine driving in Paris, and I was sure Philippe and Elizabeth would provide transport when we were with them. If we went to Fontainebleau it would be just for the day. But this did put it into my head that the ability to drive a car was coming to be expected these days. After we got back, and after the wedding, we should both sign on for lessons at Marjory's place. And very likely take the next step, and acquire a car of our own. It would make travel to Argyll a lot easier.

# Edinburgh

IN KIRKTON, Marjory's father now occupied Mr Anderson's old place in the community, and did so very much in the same way as his predecessor had done. Her mother was preparing for the wedding. The Stewart house had gone quiet, while the business was humming with activity as it took on its post-war shape.

The family network now seemed to have its centre in Edinburgh, or perhaps more precisely in Mr Anderson. His own life had been transformed. As far as work was concerned he said he was now being paid more for doing less. By this all he really meant was that he no longer had to sit at his desk grinding away at innumerable small problems. He actually put in more hours than ever, as he became the bank's main contact with the world outside it, and he had many evening engagements – but he could never see this as *work*, and indeed he got a lot of pleasure from meeting people and making new friends in the upper strata of the Edinburgh banking world.

At home, his wife did her best to stop him from getting too much involved with dolls' houses, but to stick to his photography, now picking up again as film and other materials became more easily available. He did begin to collect "research" references, such as whatever he could find

on the famous Queen Mary's Doll's House, but Jim made it clear that he wasn't all that interested in such things. "Dad", he said one day, "You must understand that I am not trying to make museum pieces or great works of art. I want to make things for little girls to play with, and I'm trying to find out just what that calls for, and to produce well made *toys*. For one thing, I am not aiming at miniature realism".

"Playing means using your imagination, and any experienced mother will tell you that the most played-with dolls are not realistic at all. Rag dolls, in fact, are always very popular. When I finish designing the basic Jim Anderson doll's house, it won't have working plumbing, but it will be easily opened up so that its owner can rearrange the furniture or think up activities for the dolls that I'll also provide. They will be at the right scale, but pretty basic – not collectors' items at all. My best assistant is Ann, who knows exactly what I mean. I hope I can sub-contract everything to do with textiles to her, for a start. She wants Maggie to get into the act as well".

It was Jim's father, nevertheless, who facilitated some of the first material progress. After discussions about the amount of space needed, he caused a substantial wooden shed to be built on a concrete base behind his garage, with one all-purpose work bench to start with, and well thought out electric lighting and power points. He said he'd charge it up to Alison when she got back from France. Jim began to acquire tools and "miniature" machinery. He had got into an evening class at which, he said, he had already made a good start, particularly on one skill that had been worrying him – the apparently simple enough business of keeping



your tools sharp. And they had referred him to a “saw doctor” to whom he could entrust the maintenance of his little 15-cm circular saws. His father was a good source of information on where in Edinburgh you could buy small quantities of the materials he needed, and also about where to look for information about other items, like doll-sized crockery and cutlery. With this help, Jim acquired as many catalogues as he could get hold of.

Some of this raised the question of scale. The British (and very likely, they thought, the Americans) were fond of the ratio 1:12, which meant that life size in feet was model size in inches, but after much inquiry Jim decided to adopt a standard scale of 1:10. The arithmetic was no real difficulty! It would make everything just slightly bigger and easier to play with, and it would be easier to use some of the interesting continental sources he was discovering. German industry was still in ruins, but the Swiss seemed to be specially good at dolls and their accessories.

Things were going well for Ann and Maggie. Their life took a surprising turn in that the two of them were far more gregarious than any of their seniors had ever been, and they were apt to turn up at home with half a dozen of their fellow students, of both sexes. Mrs Anderson got in a dozen mugs – cheap enough, she said, to count as disposable stores – and laid on supplies of coffee, with the option of tea or cocoa. The two girls baked biscuits in large quantities from a simple recipe. They had long sessions, mainly of talk as far as the adults could ever discover, in the attic, which had at one time been turned into a sort of dormitory bedroom, but had not yet been given the “refurbishing” treatment.

There was no obvious sign of pairing off among the group of regular coffee drinkers, but eventually Ann confided in her mother that she was particularly attracted to a young student of architecture, by the name of David Ross, and that Maggie seemed to have the same idea about his friend Bill Johnson. Her mother said they could ask the boys to tea some Saturday, but Ann said she was hoping they would make the first move, which in fact they did just a day or two later, by asking the two girls to join them at the cinema. After that, it wasn't just one invitation to tea, but a weekly event, and the cinema was followed by evenings at the theatre and occasionally by concerts of classical music. They said they "went Dutch" as was the convention among art students.

And meantime the gatherings in the loft continued, and the number of mugs had to be augmented. Ann explained that there were three welcoming households, all in their own part of town, and that many of those who weren't children of the people concerned came from other places, mostly in Scotland, but a few from England, and one or two from still further away. There were even two boys from Nyasaland (now known to the world as Malawi). Their own two special friends came from "somewhere up north – they went to school in Inverness". And, she told her parents, two of the Edinburgh girls came from a poor part of the town and it was presumed that their parents neither had room for such gatherings, nor could they afford to supply refreshments on the scale required. "But nobody minds", she said. The two girls in question were brilliant in their college work. There would be an exhibition and she would show them.

### **Pillow talk**

*What do you make of these get-togethers in the attic?*

*They're doing nothing but good, as far as I can see. I suppose it's time taken off what might be used for study, or practising their arts, but they are not at it every evening of the week, and at least they must to some extent be talking about their work, and exchanging ideas.*

*And certainly learning how to get along with other people.*

*I am just a little worried that they might get into this drugs business. There is a lot of talk about it at the office.*

*There is no sign of it with our lot. They seem to be a remarkably law-abiding collection. I do do a little snooping in the attic the next day, and there is no trace of any unwanted activity. But I'll have a word with Ann.*

*What about the boy friends?*

*Full marks for both of them so far. Just what a mother hopes for. I've told Ann to get Maggie to tell her mother about her one, if she hasn't already done so. Should we do anything to contact the parents at the other two gathering places?*

*Yes, I think we should. But do it through Ann, not behind her back.*

*Yes, of course. I'm not that stupid. I'll talk to her first and then maybe try a couple of phone calls. I'm sure the other parents must be having similar thoughts. Since we harbour two of the young, we'll have an excuse for taking the initiative. A Sunday lunch party, maybe?*

*Yes – and I'll see what I can find in the wine merchant's.*

## Renewing contact

ELIZABETH MET US at the Gare du Nord, and took us by taxi to the Dumont flat. We had travelled overnight, and I was still at a stage in pregnancy which didn't make me feel at my best, even after an ordinary night in bed, so I probably wasn't taking things in very well, but at least I was conscious of a great change in Elizabeth. She had always been a good-looking girl, but now, I thought, she was nothing less than beautiful. John told me later, when we were on our own, that he was bowled over. He wasn't making any comparisons, he said, but I must admit that Elizabeth was now something special. And it hadn't been done by French clothes, or coiffure or make-up, she just was a real live beauty. I could do nothing but agree, and try to console myself that when there wasn't competition like this around I looked pretty good myself.

When we arrived at the flat she and Philippe greeted each other with a hug and a kiss, as if after a long absence, although they had been apart, I suppose, for less than a couple of hours. I got a kiss too, but only of the usual formal French variety, and he shook John's hand in a friendly way.

Elizabeth then picked young Jean-Paul up from the rug on the floor, and quite unconsciously made the prettiest picture, holding him in her arms. When I had said what a fine baby he was, and John had also admired him, we all sat down, and Philippe asked what we would like, but in my case suggested some fresh orange juice which he had just prepared for me. John said if there was enough to go round he would like some of that too. We handed over the cloth bag that Ann had made and decorated specially to hold the collection of presents we had brought from Scotland, and Elizabeth said she would open them all up after lunch.

Philippe helped with our luggage and showed us into our bedroom. He explained that fortunately it had been modernized in the 1930s, and that the door on the other wall led to a bathroom. What had been done was to sacrifice the middle one of three bedrooms, which had been the smallest of them, to provide each of the other two with its own facilities.

He remembered the place as it had formerly been, as “very primitive”. Now it was all a bit shabby, he said, but he and Elizabeth had been charged with getting it all back to what it should be. They had begun with a big cleaning, and had just about finished it in time for our arrival. Their old caretaker wasn’t able to do much, but he had brought his daughter in to help, so if we saw a middle-aged lady around, that’s who she was. We’d be going out for some meals, otherwise Elizabeth would be seeing to things herself. “With more help from me than she would get

from most French husbands”, added Philippe. “Take your time to get sorted out”, he said, “we can eat whenever you’re ready, it’s all cold stuff”.

We had what was really only a sort of picnic lunch, but everything was just right. We said the biggest treat was the good French bread – in Scotland we were still only able to buy the healthy but unappetizing wartime kind. Elizabeth pointed out that many of the things on the table came from the family estate, including notably the delicious butter, and also the white wine, which Philippe said was very ordinary, but tasted good to us.

What had she been doing? I asked. “Playing with her living doll”, said Philippe, but added quickly that he was only joking. They had been in Paris for a fortnight, and she had been working hard all day, as well as having her sleep interrupted several times in the night. She had been spared any of the rough work in the house, she said herself, but there had been much shopping to do, and she and Philippe had devoted one whole day, as far as the baby would allow, to her new job. She explained about the family library, and told us how one of the university librarians had been extraordinarily helpful in showing her how things were done in France, and in advising her about where to buy all the things she needed to work with, as well as the manual that all French librarians referred to. She would show it all to John when we got home, she said – and I too would find it interesting. The books she had to deal with could provide John with reading matter for a few years, she thought, but that would have to be for some future time, as there were

so many other things to show us. John especially would have much to talk about with her father-in-law, while she was sure I would find it the same with Philippe's mother. She said, and I was sure she wasn't just trying to please Philippe, that for her it had been like having acquired an extra real mother, especially when the baby was born.

And now, whatever John wanted to do, she strongly recommended a siesta for me. Then we could take the baby out for some fresh air in a nearby park, bring him home for his bath, and go out again to the little restaurant they regularly used, taking him with us – he's usually very good, she said. "And by the way", she put in, "don't worry about money. Do any shopping you want, but we'll pay for everything else. And then when we come to Scotland you can do the same for us. No laws will be broken and we'll end up equal, near enough". I thought that even John's father could hardly find anything morally wrong with this arrangement, and John agreed with me. He said that he too felt like having a short sleep.

I had never been in Paris before, and Elizabeth said that she had never "done" it as a tourist, so we agreed to see some of the usual things, beginning with the Eiffel Tower. This really was a good start to our day, as it was a beautiful spring morning, and we had magnificent views of the city. We went on to Notre Dame, and then Philippe led us across the river to what he said had been his regular eating place when he was a student. I was surprised, as he must have known I would be, by how good the food



was. John said he could remember coming to a similar place with his parents. Then he got in his special request. Could we go back across the bridge to the Chapelle Royale? The afternoon sun would be shining in now, he said. Sure enough it was, and he just stood still for a long time, contemplating the magnificent windows. This is a must for Ann and Maggie, I said. He pointed out that Ann had already been there but, he said, she was too young at the time. A whole two years younger than you, I thought, but then you were notoriously precocious. Elizabeth said it was high time to be taking the baby home, although she had found a place to feed him at the restaurant, so the rest of that day was a repeat of the preceding one.

The next day was a Saturday, and she wanted to do some last minute jobs in the flat. She explained that she had planned to devote Sunday to Fontainebleau, where she had made an arrangement with our old friends the Lesages and Demoulins, as I had asked her to do, and that on Monday we would be leaving for the Dumonts' country home. So she suggested that we might like to go and see some things by ourselves. Shopping maybe, or we could go into the Louvre and say that at least we had seen the Mona Lisa. She had never been into it, but promised herself a proper visit some day. We said we'd do some shopping first anyway, and get ourselves some lunch. John suggested a short trip on a *bateau mouche*, just to remind himself of his youth (he would be twenty in a few months' time!) and he would otherwise be happy just to walk about a bit. Maybe go into a bookshop and look around its shelves.

So that was more or less what we did, and enjoyed another fine spring day, feeling as free as air and, as always, finding each other's company all that was really necessary. John said he remembered his father's shopping priority – perhaps I had noticed that there was a very pretty cake plate in the house? – and maybe we could find something of the same sort for a present to take home. In fact we chose another one, “the same but different” as he put it, on the grounds that high tea, Anderson style, very often called for two such plates.

Elizabeth had spoken to both Mme Desmoulins and Mme Lesage, and agreed that rather than try to meet up in Paris it would be nice for everybody if we all gathered in Fontainebleau. We could go to the Lesage flat from the train and find them there. When we did, and after all the expected rejoicings had been expressed, and the new introductions made, we delivered the second of Ann's bags and its assorted contents. They told us we were invited to lunch at the old restaurant, which I remembered from 1938. It won't be like a full-scale old-fashioned Sunday lunch, they warned us, but a more everyday affair. Mme Lesage said: “People have got into the way of lighter meals, although we do occasionally have a good old-fashioned banquet”. Philippe commented that his tribe had always had a reputation for abstemiousness, and that he himself really preferred simple food, and not too much of it.

We all talked a great deal over lunch, and at the end of it we said good-bye to what, I suppose, were really John's

old friends, except for Robert and Pauline, who said they would like to join us in a short walk into the forest, as far as the old reserved oak tree where we had gone on my last visit. Philippe promised that some day he would bring Elizabeth back to visit the great chateau.

He told the Lesage and Desmoulins families that if they were ever in his part of the country they would always be welcome guests, and added the somewhat more probable suggestion that Robert and Pauline might like to arrange a visit anyway. “The *vendange* is a good time”, he said. “We always need extra hands, and you’ll even get paid for it, as well as having a good holiday”.

Most of our talk had been in French. Elizabeth was now very fluent. John did a lot better than you would expect from someone who had only studied it for three years at school. He said he had his first visit to Fontainebleau to thank for that. It had got him off to a good start, and he had increased his vocabulary by reading, with a dictionary to hand. I had to struggle, and often had to be helped out, but they said my pronunciation would pass.

On the Monday, we took the train to Bourges. Elizabeth said she had been to see the cathedral there and that it was well worth a visit. A car had been sent to collect us, and we had quite a long drive through a very attractive countryside. After we had met Philippe’s parents, Elizabeth took us to our room. Like the one in Paris it had been modernized, with its own bathroom, and it also had a little balcony, from which she was able to point out some of the

main features of the estate, including the home farm and parts of the vineyards and the forest.

After another simple but excellent lunch, which seemed to be a regular feature of life with the Dumonts, I was packed off for my siesta, while John got into an almost continuous conversation with M. Dumont, which went on throughout our stay.

I was in fact quite tired, but not at all sleepy, and I found myself thinking about how life had treated Elizabeth and me. We both came from ordinary enough middle-class Scottish families, and both of us were now rich, in our very different ways. I had a joke of my own about her, which I wouldn't have shared even with John. She had met her frog, kissed him, and he had turned out to be her Prince Charming! For my part, I had had this strange history of meeting my John Anderson, my Jo indeed, at the extraordinary age of ten. On the landed-property side I thought that she was winning, for all that I thought that our little corner of Argyll must be the most beautiful place on earth. From the glimpses I had had of it so far, the Dumont domain seemed idyllic. But there wasn't much point in making the comparison – we were both very lucky. Neither of us had done much to bring it about. Elizabeth had had no inkling that the young Frenchman among the “waifs and strays” was heir to all this. As for John and me, I was still feeling annoyed by that joke about him having married me for my money, and was more than ever convinced that I had been the gainer, at least as much as him. Now I could see that, as was his wont, he had struck up an instant new

friendship with M. Dumont. I wondered what they were finding to talk about, and what it might lead to.

Afterwards he told me that he thought this might in fact mark a turning point for him. He had been working up, first to the general idea that his field would be the history of ideas, and then, following some hints provided by Dr White, that the seventeenth century might be especially interesting. And now, M. Dumont had put it into his head that the seventeenth century *in France* might be worth a closer look. Everybody knew a lot about the eighteenth, and the part played then by the French – some English-speaking scholars even called themselves *dix-huitièmistes* – but there must surely have been interesting precursors in France, just as there had been in England. He knew a little about it already, but there must be much more, and this was what M. Dumont, it seemed, also thought. He would look into it more closely, but there seemed to be a good chance of finding a PhD subject in this area, and who knows where that might eventually take him?

We stayed for a whole week at the chateau, and made only one short excursion, to see a very small, very ancient Romanesque church. Philippe said that this part of France had many others like it. This one had been a village church, but its village had long since disappeared, and it stood in isolation, no longer in use as a church, but maintained as an ancient monument. John still had his father's old camera, and took several photographs, to add to those he was taking of the chateau and other parts of the estate.

It was not long before we had decided that this self-contained existence in such a beautiful place was the best kind of life anybody could hope to have, but Elizabeth said to remember we were seeing it at its best, and that although she loved it in all seasons, the winter weather could be more difficult. "We're quite far south", she said, "and get plenty of sunshine to ripen the grapes, but we're a long way from the sea, so it is just ever so slightly a continental climate, and it can be surprisingly cold". John said: "You must get a lot of fruit, as well as grapes" and Elizabeth confirmed that this was so. She couldn't make up her mind which she liked best of all, the cherries which would be coming along soon, or the peaches that came in the summer.

She and her father-in-law together showed us over the library. "It's a disgrace", he said, "but Elizabeth is going to have a happy life, I hope, putting it all in order. I have been promising to do it myself for years, but running an estate like this takes up a lot of time, and at heart I am an out-of-doors man. If I have a choice between a day in the forest and a day in the library it's always the forest that wins. I do my reading in the evenings, but I just never seem to have the extra time needed for sorting and indexing it all. Even I can't always find the books that I know are in here somewhere, and someone like John wouldn't have a hope".

Elizabeth showed us her librarian's equipment, which was simple enough, and explained that she would have to start by a system of categories, which she would be

discussing, of course, with M. Dumont. She would have a good look round first, to try to get some general idea of what she had to cope with, but one fairly urgent priority would be to identify the rare or otherwise valuable items and put them in a safe place. There were not only books, she said, but all these chests full of documents, pointing to a row of old boxes lined up along one wall. She would like to think there might be some interesting things to find in there. "I'm quite sure there are", M. Dumont said, "and once Elizabeth has put some order into it all, I'll help her to select anything that might be worth referring to the experts in Paris".

John was struck by the fact that that although he had only just begun his time as an undergraduate, here he was, getting a glimpse of what advanced history research was all about. He resolved that he would do everything in his power to keep up his connection with Elizabeth and her genial father-in-law.

Then it was time to go home. Our first idea had been to travel a little more widely in France, but we agreed that we couldn't possibly have had a more enjoyable visit than this one. And although I had a baby on the way, and would soon have to turn my attention to Argyll, I most certainly wanted to come back to the Chateau Dumont. I could see that John was dead set on doing so, sooner rather than later.

Elizabeth and Philippe said they were very sorry to miss her sister's wedding, but they just couldn't face the long and complicated journey with the baby. They hoped to see the newly-weds soon, either in Scotland or in France. They

were entrusting their wedding present to me. It was a large and very beautiful bowl made from the wood of an old and exceptionally big cherry tree that had been cut down on the estate a few years ago, and had been commissioned from a well known wood turner in Bourges. "At least it's not breakable", I said. "No", said Elizabeth, "not like glass or china – but it's not indestructible, so do take care of it". She had in fact packed it well, and it arrived safely, to be displayed at many a dinner party in the years to come, as something of a conversation piece, because of where it had come from.



# Another wedding

**W**HEN JOHN and Alison came back from France, they managed to persuade Mr Anderson to sit down and have a proper look at John's photographs – which he said were showing some progress – and to listen to their stories of life with the Dumonts. But even Mrs Anderson, and everybody else in the family, gave the forthcoming wedding in Kirkton first place in their conversation. Ann and Maggie seemed less interested in their presents from France than in showing Alison their bridesmaids' dresses.

Jim had left for the Stewarts' house, where he was to stay until the wedding in two days' time. John retreated to the flat, saying he had a lot to put ready for the start of his third term next week. Alison set to work to make sure that their clothes were all in good order for the wedding. She thought that this would be the last appearance she could make without getting some maternity dresses, for which she could claim extra coupons. They would be spending the Friday and Saturday nights with the Stewarts, and her mother, as well as Mrs Forbes, would be more interested in hearing about Elizabeth and her baby than the Edinburgh people had been.

The wedding followed the pattern set by Elizabeth's. The best man was their old evacuee, George. Alastair, of course,

was also around. Marjory continued to have slight doubts about it all, right up to the night before, and one of the things that bothered her was that Jim had so few male friends – or in fact friends of any kind, outside the three families.

If Elizabeth had been there she would probably have confided in *her*, but anyway she rather thought that Elizabeth would just have said, in her big-sisterly way, that this was nothing out of the ordinary – there is bound to be some tension in the air as you approach this supposedly irrevocable decision. Mr Forbes sensed that things were not quite normal, but decided that if he said anything to Marjory or her mother it might only stir up trouble for nothing. “It takes all sorts”, he told himself, and Marjory was old enough, and had seen enough of the world, to know what she was doing. And although Jim was something of an oddity he seemed to be a decent sort, and he was certainly an authentic war hero, who had had a rough time with his multiple injuries.

In one way, at least, this marriage was more conventional than either Elizabeth’s or Alison’s, in that it was immediately followed by the honeymoon, in a small hotel in St Andrews with a view out to sea, that Marjory had once had lunch in, and had remembered as a friendly and well-run place. And as the observant staff could have certified, the two of them seemed very happy to be together. The truth was that Jim was indeed not like other men, but that Marjory understood him better than most women would have done, and soon learned how to deal with his occasional quirks or strange moods. Although he had always been “different”, some of it now was related to recurring physical pain, both from

one of his leg wounds and from his internal injuries. She got him to go back to the doctors to see what more they could do – and at least he got some useful advice on diet – and she managed to alleviate the pain in his thigh, by learning how to massage it.

When they returned to Edinburgh, Marjory carried on with her driving instructor's job (or as most people said in those benighted times, "instructress's"). Jim was making rapid progress, and he could in fact have produced an acceptable doll's house after another month or two, with most of its furniture, but he was determined not to put one on display until everything met his own exacting standards, as well as having Ann's seal of approval.

As promised, Alison and John joined Marjory's queue of customers for driving lessons, and managed to find a small pre-war second-hand car, checked over by the AA, to practice on. Until they could pass the driving test they had to persuade Mr Anderson to go out with them for practice at the weekends. They both passed, just before Alison's pregnancy made it all too difficult for her.

John was taking the MA course centred on History. It began with lectures on the foundations of modern Europe, and this was a subject about which, as he realized, he knew very little, even if he had some vague idea of what Charlemagne, for example, had done. Bookworm as he was, he groaned under the weight of reading that was demanded. Over the next three years he could look forward to hearing what Dr Scott had to say about the Renaissance, and he would have to tackle British History, taking him eventually up to the First World War.

To History, central to his interests, he had added “Political Economy”, as “Economics” was still called. That class, he found, was not too demanding, as he had read Adam Smith’s classic work (he was the *only* student who had) and thought he understood it reasonably well, and there had also been some good semi-popular works that had been passed on to him by his father – usually with a comment to the effect that they weren’t about real economics as it used to be understood.

He took the introductory class in Philosophy, and although some of that was not new to him, much of it was, and (as was, of course, the intention) it set him *thinking*. The lecturer had to cover a wide territory, but in particular he was an enthusiastic student of David Hume’s writings, and shed much new light on them for John.

To top it all he took the introductory class in Mathematics. He hated having to admit it, but this tested his mental abilities to the limit, and he even wondered if he would get a pass. The other students who took it were studying it now because they had done especially well in maths at school. The level was set accordingly, and for John, who had only just had better than average marks, it progressed at a punishing speed. His aim was reasonable enough, he thought. If you studied the history of ideas you couldn’t ignore physics and astronomy (or cosmology), and to understand them you had to have at least an outline knowledge of what the mathematics was all about. It was a problem, but he would do what he could.

Being his father’s son, he would really have liked to do something on languages, and more on the history of the

world outside Europe – particularly that of the USA – and perhaps something on religion, but practicable limits were soon reached, and it was only because the university demanded diversification that he had managed to cram in as much as he had. And even he couldn't do very much extra-curricular reading – there just weren't enough hours in the day.

He did discover the secret of universities, however. They bring together a set of mentally active people, nearly all with a lot to say for themselves, whether it is ephemeral nonsense, or to express some degree of enlightenment. His personal daily timetable soon came to include a carefully rationed number of hours in the Students' Union, drinking an equally well calculated amount of beer. Alison didn't complain.

The summer term was a solid slog, ending with the third set of "class examinations". If you did well enough in these you were excused the "degree" ones in the subjects concerned, and John found himself excused from everything, including mathematics. He claimed that it was the only subject he had been worried about, although in fact even if he had had to take the exam and had failed, it need not have greatly affected him as far as getting a degree was concerned – he would just have dropped mathematics, and made sure he had enough other passes in the remaining three years. For the rest of his working life he struggled to understand the mathematical parts of what he read, and to tell the truth he had had to gloss over a good deal of it, and try to understand, as best he could from the written explanations available, just what it was that people like James Clerk

Maxwell, for example, had contributed. But at least his dogged year of so-called “introductory” study was more than most historians had ever done.

The only family event that occurred during this summer term was Mr and Mrs Forbes’s visit to France. Once again Elizabeth had effected a meeting at the Gare du Nord, and they had two nights at the flat, where, like Alison and John before them, they found Philippe looking after the baby. They too could see that Elizabeth’s beauty had bloomed astonishingly, and wondered, honestly and modestly, where she had got it from. Their grandchild was of course perfect, and for that matter they were pleased to see that country life was evidently agreeing with Philippe – even the slight difficulty caused by his artificial foot was now hardly noticeable. They satisfied their natural curiosity about every detail of life on the estate, but what they boasted about back in Kirkton was not Elizabeth’s rise in the social scale, or even her remarkable beauty – that wouldn’t have been right – but about the wonderful baby she had produced. The proposed visit in the other direction had been fixed for late summer, “when the heather will be in bloom”, as Philippe put it.

**Pillow talk**

*Two down and one to go!*

*Yes, I can’t stop thinking of Ann as a little girl, but she’s only two years younger than John.*

*She does have a boy friend – in our old way of talking. And he seems like a very nice one.*

*I'm sure you can depend on Ann to make a sensible choice.*

*Not just sensible, I hope, although with Marjory it seems to be sense that has worked.*

*Yes, not many girls could have coped with our son Jim, the way she has.*

*And very soon we are going to be grandparents.*

*I do hope all goes well with Alison.*

*The reports are all favourable so far. I don't think there's anything to worry about.*

*Once the baby is actually here I think they'll want to move out. As I understand it money is no problem.*

*I hope they can find somewhere within walking distance. I want to see a lot of this baby.*

*Don't be an interfering mother-in-law.*

*No, Alison and I have always got along well. It's you that rubs her up the wrong way now and again.*

*Yes, I must try not to. We're really good friends at some deeper level. I think.*

*Mary tells me things are moving at their Argyll place. I talked to Alison about it recently. I think her hotel scheme should work. It's certainly a beautiful part of the country.*

## One more Anderson

ONE AFTERNOON in early July I felt the contractions beginning, and asked John to start putting our plan into action. We were getting ready to leave for the hospital when Mr Anderson came home from work. He told John that he couldn't allow this precious cargo to be transported in that old jalopy, and would he please get it out of the drive while he got the proper car out. Neither John nor I was in any mood for an argument, so he did what he was told, and we set off for the Simpson Maternity Pavilion, with John and his father in the front and his mother and me in the back. She would see me in, and then they would just leave me there until they got a message to come – it was only a few minutes by car.

The baby was born just two hours later. They told me it had been an easy birth. "In that case I hope I never have a difficult one", I said – and in fact I never did. I was very lucky, or well built for the job, so all four of our brood made an "easy" entrance to the world. Everything, they say, is relative.

John was allowed in to see his daughter briefly later in the evening, and the next day my mother came on the first



train from Kirkton. She would stay at the Andersons' until I came out of hospital, and my father would be there at the weekend.

John had insisted that if it was a girl there was only one possible name for her, Mary, and anyway I had no alternative to offer. He also claimed that she *looked* like my mother, although I couldn't see it myself. Actually, however, as she grew up he was proved right, and there was a striking resemblance. So, he said, we have one more "Bonny Mary". "What about 'Bonny Alison'?" I had asked him. "That's different" he said. "Next time, maybe".

When my father came, and had said all the right things about the baby, he and my mother and John and I settled down to discuss a number of matters. First, I said, we had decided to move into a flat of our own, and would be pleased to get any advice on how to set about it. We didn't really know how long we were going to live in Edinburgh, but what we wanted was a place that would do for anything from three to six years. Then we'd either want something more permanent, or quite likely it wouldn't be in Edinburgh anyway. My father said it wouldn't make much difference if we were simply buying one with our own money. Unless anything quite unexpected occurred we would probably be able to sell it again for at least as much as we paid for it.

The next item was Jim and his dolls' houses. My father said he was feeling generally favourable to Mr Anderson's idea, and he had discussed it with the company's Director in Edinburgh, who had explained that under the current tax

regime it would be a good move to invest in a new small company, if it wasn't an unreasonably risky speculation – which in my father's opinion, it wasn't. So I went and asked Jim and Marjory if they would like to hear what my father had to say. They suggested that for a start we might all like to go and inspect the workshop and see how things had already been getting on. My mother came too, and we made quite a crowd in the little shed. The main exhibit, of course, was the prototype, and Jim explained what his novel ideas had been, and what remained to be done before he showed it to potential buyers. My father said it looked good to him, and that he would accept Ann's opinion on it, but he had one main question: supposing some orders were forthcoming, or seemed likely, what would be the rate of production?

Jim said he agreed that that was the crucial point of any "business plan". He saw it in two parts. First of all, he would make a small number, maybe a dozen. It wouldn't take anything like as long as twelve times what it would take to make one, as all the components could be made in dozens – "let's say baker's dozens, to allow for breakage", he said – and assembling them was quite a quick job; he had been careful in his designing to make it so. They would sell one by one, and as that got under way they should acquire premises and equip them for a much bigger production. He would need to take on one or two assistants. "Not *mass* production though", he said, "I'm aiming at the Rolls Royce of dolls' houses, not the Ford. And I hope I can price them accordingly".

My father said the only workable answer to the pricing problem would be to get an expert opinion as soon as the final prototype was available. The company's accountant would then have the tricky decision to make as to whether it would produce an acceptable profit. Generally, you couldn't expect what was essentially a "craft" business to generate huge profits; that was the nature of the thing. Marjory said they understood all that, and were going into it with their eyes open. So long as their joint income was enough for a reasonable standard of living, they would both be happy, and they were very grateful for all the family support they had already been getting, especially mine and Mr and Mrs Anderson's.

My father said he would go ahead and ask the Director to set up a small subsidiary, and afterwards Jim could deal directly with him – at least it would all be in Edinburgh. My loans would be reimbursed as soon as possible, and then it would be up to the Director to authorize further expenditure. Doing it this way would mean that Jim would have to be given a monthly salary, a very modest one to start with, but to be increased as the thing prospered, as he was sure it would. He himself would continue to take an interest and he wished Jim the best of luck, or whatever it took to get such an enterprise through these first tricky moves.

We three "Stewarts" then got together to continue with our other affairs, and John went back to his books. He said that he was very willing to leave the flat business to me, as soon as I felt up to it.

My mother explained that the lawyer in Oban had been very helpful in settling up with the army and had kept her informed about everything ever since my grandmother had died. Now the army had gone, and our housekeeper had moved back in as caretaker. She was getting too old, but she had said that her daughter, who had been widowed in the war, would like to take over, and he had agreed, "subject to further instructions". The army had carried out the terms of the lease agreement, which included demolishing all their temporary buildings, and had paid the final instalment of rent, plus compensation for damage. Unfortunately, of course, as we had foreseen, it all looked a bit of a mess. He suggested that one or more of the family should come and inspect it as soon as convenient. He would be pleased to go on acting as our legal representative if we so desired.

I said I would certainly agree with the last bit. As to it being convenient for me to go there, I thought that would have to wait until well into the autumn, or maybe even until next spring, if one of them could find time to get something moving in the meantime. My mother said she thought she could cope on her own with all that was needed immediately. My father was – as always nowadays – far too busy with the company's affairs. If I agreed, she would go in a few days' time. I suggested asking the lawyer if he had any advice to give about an architect – was there one in Oban, or maybe he might know of an Edinburgh firm that had worked in the district?

## Arts and crafts

**A**NN AND MAGGIE did well in their first year, and were encouraged by the College to do a two-part work together for the summer exhibition. It was sufficiently unusual to attract some attention from the newspapers, although their two young budding architect friends said unkindly that they would have preferred some original modern art work. They had got hold of good illustrations of the Bayeux tapestry, which had greatly impressed Ann in 1938, and had boned up on its history, with help from John, in order to produce two matching panels, each of them a faithful reproduction, as near as they could manage it, of one of two well known scenes. The unbleached linen was found for them by Mr Stewart, and their woollen thread was produced by the ancient methods.

Maggie's parents came from Kirkton to admire their daughter's work, and also took the opportunity to meet this "Bill" she had been telling them about. They were invited to a very informal lunch party at the Anderson house, attended by most of the coffee drinkers. As Mrs Macleod remarked, it made a real break from life in Kirkton.

The two girls had seen Jim's work in progress, and now the two student architects were also allowed to see it, and both took a lively interest in Jim's explanations of how he had been aiming at a toy that invited imaginative play. When he told them that he was now moving into limited production, it was Ann's friend David who had a sudden inspiration. "Do you need any help?" he asked. He said he wanted something to do to pass the summer vacation, and would be pleased to work on the project for no pay. Jim was under no illusions about the mixed motives involved, but took it seriously when Bill made the same offer, and the girls said they would do anything involving textiles or sewing.

It was largely Ann who organized it all. The boys worked in the shed, and the girls in the house, as there wasn't enough room for all of them in the little workshop. She prevailed on her mother to supply simple, but more than adequate lunches for the whole party, and she herself organized the production of doll-scale curtains, table cloths, floor coverings and bedding, doing the work along with Maggie. Dolls to suit the houses had been bought as one large order, complete with changes of clothing, but Ann thought that in future most of that should be done "in house".

As Jim had foreseen, making each little piece of everything by the dozen made the work go quickly. He had to begin by teaching the two boys how to do it from his set of models, but he was soon able to start on the assembly work himself. By the end of the vacation they were able to line up twelve magnificent doll's houses. The Stewarts came from Kirkton and the company's Edinburgh Director and his wife came to inspect, and all were hugely impressed.

Maggie's parents also came, and the boys' parents also arrived from Inverness-shire. It was quite a party.

Jim's father had his own valuable contribution to make. He took a large number of photographs, from which the best half dozen were selected, and then, having quizzed Jim closely about what he wanted to say, he put together an attractive little brochure and had it printed.

Jim commented that he was immensely grateful to them all, and he hoped they had all enjoyed their summer and had got something out of it, but now he just didn't know how to interpret the economics. What would it all mean back in the real world, where every little bit of work or material had to be paid for in pounds, shillings and pence? His father said this had all been a really worth-while summer, and they would find out soon enough about the business side of things, but that he had every confidence that it was going to be a success.

Marjory took a fortnight off work and, as a skilled driver, was allowed to borrow her father-in-law's treasured car. The houses were carefully boxed, and she set off with Jim on a round of calls on the leading toy shops of a dozen cities. Each one agreed to take the single sample house they were supplied with, and each and every one was sold within a few days, in spite of what Jim himself had thought was an exorbitant price tag, and then all of them ordered more, even when it was explained that there would be a delay until the "factory" was in full production. They had become accustomed to delays ever since 1939. Mr Anderson gave his opinion that Jim was in for a busy winter. Unfortunately it would not be possible to deliver anything in time for

Christmas, but they should sell fairly small numbers, that were all they had ever aimed at, during the following year, and try to have as many as possible ready for Christmas 1947.

Elizabeth and Philippe had shown up in September, but only on a fleeting call to let the Edinburgh people see the baby. Work on the dolls' houses was stopped for half an hour while everyone gathered round to admire him. His parents said that they just couldn't picture a small French boy playing with a doll's house, but maybe he'd have a sister one of these days, and then they would certainly be in the market. It was Philippe who observed that for anyone who had the space, as they had, it was not only a good toy in itself, but could be the centre piece for a whole make-believe garden – one of its original features was a wide terrace with tables and chairs.

When they had gone the talk was not so much of Jean-Paul as of his mother. Ann and Maggie said that one of the girls at the College would just love to do a portrait of her, and in fact this was arranged for the following summer, when the young but very promising artist had what she said had been a wonderful holiday, quite apart from its being her first commission. It is still where Philippe and his parents all said it must go, over the great fireplace in the main hall of the chateau.

They had a chat with John and Alison, comparing babies. Elizabeth then said they had one errand in the town, which was to pick up a copy of a new book on Mary, Queen of Scots, for M. Dumont. John said he had read it. It was a publisher's joke, he said, that *any* book about her was sure



to sell, and there must be at least one coming out every year, but this one was in fact worth reading. It was written by a real historian, who had realized that the main interest was not in the hopeless chase for “the facts”, but in bringing home to the reader the huge change in ideas since those times, about nearly every aspect of life – to take just one example, the idea that a sovereign *could* not break the law. Nobody was neutral or impartial about Mary. He himself had a most unscholarly preference for her, and thought John Knox was a terrible old bigot.

They had also fitted in a short visit to their old landlady, Elizabeth’s aunt, who thought it would be impolite to say anything about Elizabeth except that she “was looking very well”, but was unstinting in her admiration of her great-nephew. She was invited to go and visit them in France, but she said that although she was now a widow, and perfectly free to do anything she wanted, she had never really liked travelling, and was getting too old for it. She had a good life among her Edinburgh friends and they were trying to persuade her to do what most of them did in this part of town, and take in one or two students. She didn’t need the money, but it would be nice to have some young people in the house again.

### **Pillow talk**

*Now that really has been a summer for the record book. Jim's chickens haven't quite hatched, but I am quite sure now that he is on to a good thing. His ideas about the value of toys are right in line with modern theories, and as the word gets round that little girls actually want to do things with these ones, they'll sell as fast as he can make them.*

*I thought it might get a bit boring after he had finished the prototype, as he calls it, but Marjory tells me it's not like that at all. He is full of ideas for the Jim Anderson Doll's House No. 2, and he already has some drawings for it. But obviously the first thing is to get his factory running. All seems to be going well in that quarter, and she says they'll soon be advertising for assistants – young ones will be best he thinks, but she's not so sure. She says there are some older men out there with all the traditional skills, who might be pleased to take on such interesting work.*

*That's two of them, not finally settled, but at least headed in the right direction. And Ann seems to be doing pretty well at the College. And I do like David.*

## A home and family of my own

IN EDINBURGH at least, and maybe everywhere in Scotland, for all I know, a *flat* is often referred to as a *house*, but maybe because I had big ideas for the future, I generally called ours “the flat”. What mattered was that it was my first chance to make a *home*, for my Jo and me, and now also for our baby. I was determined to show what I could do when I tried.

We had offers of pieces of furniture from both of our families, but we agreed that it did not make sense to accept any from the Andersons, who had still not completed the furnishing of their own place. Ideally, we thought, we would have nothing but new furniture, but the new things that were available, even in this second year after the war, were often of very poor quality. We ended up with a mixture of a few items from Kirkton, some new

pieces when we managed to find anything acceptable, and some that we found by raking around in Edinburgh's antique shops, or just as likely in the junk shops, which produced some remarkable bargains.

Both our mothers were admirable housekeepers, but when I needed advice on things like curtains I turned to the ever helpful Ann, who I thought – and rightly so – would have ideas that were not only technically sound, but also right up to date for style. It was a good flat, in the Bruntsfield area, not far from where Elizabeth and Philippe had had their one, and not too long a walk, in good weather, to the Andersons' house.

A priority question was what to do about a piano. John told me that was entirely for me to decide. I had dared him to say it was *my* money – and I really had come to see our funds as *ours*, jointly, but in this case he could claim not to know anything about pianos, whereas I did. I said I had no intention of removing the one in Kirkton – it would always be there when we went for visits. So we settled for going back to the place where it had come from, and getting a very well preserved Edwardian instrument, which was, as I put it, one grade up on the old one.

We also did something I had been promising myself ever since I could remember, for “when I get my own house”, and acquired a young Siamese cat from the cat and dog home down in Leith. I chose a young female on the grounds that I would rather cope with a mating female cat than have a male putting his mark on all my nice things, and

somehow I just didn't like the idea of a neutered one. I told John that this was something that I insisted on doing, but as very often happened between us, he said he had had exactly the same idea, down to the choice of a female Siamese. This one had a slightly unusual history. Her previous owner had died, and none of the family or friends had wanted her, so they had brought her in – “only a couple of days ago”, they said. Unlike so many of the animals they had to deal with, she had never been ill treated, and was in perfect health. I almost felt guilty that I was taking one that hadn't needed “rescue” in the usual sense.

We bought a travelling basket for her, and to my surprise she accepted it straight away and actually seemed to like it. The first opportunity to put it to use – against some opposition from John's father, who said we must be mad – came in October, when he announced that he had arranged an expedition, on which he particularly wanted us to join him and Mrs Anderson. By this time the cat had firmly attached herself to John, who said he would take full responsibility for her, while I would take care of the baby. We couldn't possibly go off for a long day and leave either of them in the flat alone. We were to drive down through the Border country, visit the Whites somewhere just beyond Coldstream, and come back by another route.

It was one of those fine, calm days that are common enough in the Border country at that time of year, with just a slight nip in the air. Neither John nor I had ever been into

that part of Scotland before, so we enjoyed the drive. Mrs White had insisted that we should come for lunch. Their daughter was now married and would be there with her husband, so that she wouldn't have to do all the cooking herself. The husband was the vicar of a parish in Newcastle, who had once been a student of Dr White's in Oxford.

They had a small old house that had obviously been much modified since what was now its core had been built. Dr White said his favourite part was a tiny conservatory – “my miniature winter garden” he said. It caught all the sun, and on a day like this was surprisingly warm. John made sure all the doors and windows were closed before letting the cat out of her basket, but in any case, as soon as he sat down, she promptly installed herself on his lap. The three men were esconced in comfortable looking Lloyd loom chairs in the conservatory, while we three women – four if you counted Mary – went into the house to get lunch ready and to see to her needs.

John told me afterwards that his father seemed to have come with a purpose. It was as though he had wanted to continue a discussion begun in Surrey. It seemed that he had been continuing his self education by reading the *Commedia* in a bilingual edition, and he wanted some assurance that he was understanding what Dante really meant. The old scholar had tried to persuade him that there were no simple answers to such questions, and that we moderns couldn't hope to cast our minds back to the world of thirteenth-century Florence, or anything like it. When

Dante looked up at the stars – *le stelle*, which clearly had had some great significance for him – the thoughts that went through his head must have been radically different from those of a twentieth-century star-gazer.

“And yet”, by John’s account, my father-in-law had persisted: “sometimes he comes out with some image that still chimes remarkably well with ours. There are lots of lines that grab you. Out of them all, my favourite is when he finally imagines God to be a remote, unreachable point of bright light”. Dr White had said something like: “I agree with you there. But it’s not really as surprising as it may appear when you first read it. A key point of the Hebrew teaching that we have inherited is that God is ‘ineffable’. Always remember that the *sanctum sanctorum* of the temple, as the Romans discovered, was an empty room”. “So”, my father said, “all these ideas of an anthropomorphic deity are not really part of any essential religious belief?”. Dr White had smiled benignly and said: “Now you’re coming close to putting words into my mouth, and you mustn’t do that, but I suppose it’s true that my deeper ideas are closer to Dante’s than they are to a Victorian Sunday school”. And then he had deliberately turned the conversation to hearing what John had to say.

John remarked that I myself had heard all his ideas many times, but the main thing now was that Dr White had picked up and approved of his growing interest in the seventeenth century, as the precursor of the eighteenth, in France. The “missing links” between

sixteenth and eighteenth-century thought must be in there somewhere. He had once taken a special interest in the counter-reformation, he said, and he would try to look up some of his old papers and see if there was anything that might be useful. They must keep in touch – he had plenty of free time, although not always much energy, these days.

We left soon after lunch and came home by the Lauderdale road. As we came over Soutra Hill Mr Anderson stopped the car and made us all get out – “except the cat”, he said. He had nicely calculated the time of day, and there it was, his favourite view of them all, a vast panorama out over the Firth of Forth. He pointed out and identified a long list of the mountains, hills and islands that were all clear in the late afternoon sunshine.

They offered us “something to eat” at the Anderson headquarters, but I said it was time to get Mary home, and we had put things ready for our tea before we left, so we thanked them for a very good day out, and they dropped us at the main door of the flats.

Those were the days before the Clean Air Act, and with winter setting in, I thought it all made a perfect domestic scene in the evening – a cheerful coal fire, Mary asleep in my arms, and the little cat curled up on John’s lap. I suppose, looking back less sentimentally, we were actually living in the last days of the unlamented “Auld Reekie”. Even at the time, I was struck by the rate at which silver turned black, and how often the curtains required laundering. My thoughts were turning to the pure air of Argyll.



My Stewart grandparents both died, within weeks of each other, before the end of the year. My father went to the funerals, but my mother thought it was just as well for her to stay at home to look after things in Kirkton, where she would, very unusually, be on her own, and nobody suggested that I should go. My father said it had all been a very quiet affair each time. They were very old and most of their contemporaries in the district had already gone. My uncle was disposing of the house and furniture.

My father said there was nothing in it that he particularly wanted for Kirkton, except for a couple of old watercolours that he had always liked. He had however agreed with his brother that I could have my grandmother's writing desk, and if I confirmed that I wanted it, it would be carefully packed and sent the next time there was a company van going that way. I remembered being intrigued by this desk as a small child, especially when I was shown its cunningly concealed little drawer, and entrusted with the secret of how to open it. I said yes, I would like it – we still had a corner to put it in, and in fact I really needed a little desk of my own.

My mother reported that the Argyll property "might have been worse". There was a lot to see to, as we had been given money to compensate for damage, but would somehow have to get the repairs done or furniture replaced ourselves. "All quite minor", she wrote, "but there are a lot of small things all over the house and the grounds. One of us will have to be there while the work is going on. The

lawyer says that if you and John could spend the summer there, he knows a reliable builder in Oban who could probably do most of it in your vacation period. One of his men is a cabinet-maker to trade. I wouldn't attempt much more if I were you, at this stage. It's good enough for something a bit better than camping-out, and your new house-keeper is doing her best to clean it. The worst mess is actually outside. You'll have to start from scratch on the garden, and do a lot of new tree planting the following spring – Easter will probably do. I don't think you actually need a bulldozer, but a few fit young men would help".

As may have been intended, the last part made me think of the "coffee drinkers". I would consult Ann, and see if she thought her friend David, and possibly Maggie and Bill, as well of course as herself, could be tempted by a "working holiday" by the sea, with free board and lodging and at least some small cash payment. And another thought entered my ever-scheming brain. These two boys were going to be *architects*, were they not?

## The Edinburgh patriarchy

**T**HE THREE FAMILIES now had a very unequal distribution. In Kirkton both the Stewart and the Forbes parents had their houses to themselves. In Edinburgh, on the other hand, the Anderson house had not only the parents but also Jim and Marjory, as well as Ann, along with her friend Maggie, while John and Alison and their baby were not far away. Elizabeth had provided this little society with its first grandchild, but she was no longer really one of them as far as everyday life was concerned. That left only Alastair Forbes, who turned up from time to time in Kirkton, and less often in Edinburgh, usually with his mate George in tow, but they had yet to settle in any one place. Incidentally, George's mother had got married again, to the surprise of everyone (not least that of her son) to a widower of her own age, who also worked for the Stewart company in Kirkton. He had a son and daughter of his own, a little younger than George.

It came to be an accepted thing that the family patriarch was Mr Anderson, although Mr Forbes and Mr Stewart were also grandfathers. For one thing it suited his character. Mr Forbes was an easy-going small-town bank manager, and

Mr Stewart put all of his considerable ability and drive into the ever expanding company, whereas Mr Anderson had not only climbed high on his professional ladder, but also took an interest in everything and everybody.

All this was reflected in the great Christmas party of 1946. He had begun by asking his wife if she agreed that it would be a good time to get “everybody” together. This was far from being a rhetorical question. To outsiders she might seem very quiet and retiring, but he knew her better, and had the greatest respect for her ideas and opinions. Not unnaturally, her immediate reply was to ask what great scheme was he hatching this time, but when she realized that it was only to be a bigger than usual lunch (or “dinner”) party, she said she was all for it, but it would have to be a cooperative venture. Even with Ann’s help she couldn’t manage unless Alison also played a part, and most of the others did as much as they could. He said that was exactly what he had in mind, and why he had brought it up well in advance, so that she could plan it all, and get all her potential helpers to do what was needed. The first thing would be to establish the list of those who should be asked, and to find out how many of them wanted to come.

The only ones who turned down an invitation were the young Dumonts. Philippe said he had too many traditional obligations on the estate, and Elizabeth thought, but didn’t say, that she would rather see Edinburgh in the summer than in its mid-winter darkness. So the final list was the six parents, six of the seven children (including the four who had paired off), and one baby, plus George, Maggie, David and Bill. The last two would be going home for the New

Year, and negotiations were successfully undertaken for Ann and Maggie to go north with them. “But positively *no* whisky”, the patriarch told them. He meant it as a joke, but it would certainly have been an unnecessary injunction. They both said afterwards that they had had a very good time, and had been to *two* great ceilidhs – but that as far as they were concerned, it had all been done on orange juice, and the boys had stayed *relatively* sober. Relative to what or to whom, the Anderson parents wondered.

Ann and Maggie (obviously, they seemed to think) took over the decorations and the Christmas tree. The patriarchal ruling was that the presents placed under it were to be limited to those for each person’s nearest and dearest. Otherwise, as he pointed out, it could get up to  $17^2$ , which is 289, an absurd number. It was also he who did the simple arithmetic for the seating arrangements, which led to having ten, plus the baby, in the dining room, and space being made for a smaller table in the sitting room for Ann, Alastair and the four non-family guests.

Among them, with their various contacts, they managed to overcome the difficulties imposed by the continuing wartime restrictions, now beginning to be referred to as “austerity”, so that they ended up with a proper Christmas dinner. The younger members of the party found it hard to accept that it was all in the *English* tradition, but their elders assured them that there had been nothing like it in Scotland when they were young. Anyway, the young ones said, whoever started it, it had been a great party.

As an important part of her planning, Mrs Anderson had arranged for her cleaning lady to bring a friend and for the

two of them to do all the washing up in one marathon operation. They left with a generous payment, plus presents for themselves and enough mince pies to distribute to their children.

After eating, the family and, as Mr Anderson put it to his wife, the “probably-soon-to-be-family”, all sat around the tree, when he presided over an orderly distribution of the presents, and then they had some unrehearsed but competently performed carol singing, accompanied turn and turn about by Ann and Alison.

The Stewart parents then left for Kirkton, taking Maggie, Alastair and George with them, as they said their parents were demanding their presence for the rest of the holidays. John and Alison and the baby (and the cat), and Jim and Marjory, were also going there, but only for a few days at New Year.

Meanwhile, Jim’s project had been going on at two different levels. He had managed to find a disused factory of about the right size, and had got it cleared out, cleaned up, and fitted with work benches and many pigeon holes for the components, with the tools that he had found worked best on his trial run. Simultaneously he had managed to find three likely lads and two lassies, all with recommendations from the technical school, and was getting them to produce another small batch of houses, to keep things going and to train them to do the work the way he wanted it.

He had also had an application from an older man who said he had heard about Jim’s efforts and wondered if there might be a place for him. He had been a cabinet maker

before the war, and had spent it helping to make the famous Mosquito aircraft, which depended on skilled carpentry. Now he thought he was getting too old to do any sort of strenuous work, but thought that he could manage this kind, if Jim would just give him a start and show him what was wanted. Until he finally retired at 70, he was one of Jim's most useful and dependable aides.

By the time the factory was ready Jim had this little core of workers to get things started up, while he added to their numbers. As planned, they sold part of the production and also built up a stockpile for the next Christmas, so that each of his selected dozen outlets could make something of a feature of this very superior doll's house. And even before Christmas he had started to produce a second model, on the same general principles but representing quite a different sort of house, so that in the following year the buyers had two choices, and some privileged little girls all over the country had something to debate – which of them had the better doll's house? The original garden shed was kept on, as the place where successive new prototypes were created, and new ideas tried out, such as a whole series of farm buildings, that were eventually adopted as a major project many years later, when he discovered a source of 1:10 scale farm animals.

**Pillow talk**

*That was something like a Christmas. I want to do it every year.*

*I don't see why not, at least until you retire, and then if it has become a tradition, Jim and Marjory can take over.*

*I would predict that by that time John and Alison will not be around for Christmases in Edinburgh, and come to that we really don't know what Ann will be doing, even if she seems to be firmly attached to David.*

*And so far there is no sign of a grandchild in the Jim and Marjory branch. But she said one day that she really liked children, and I think it was meant to convey that she did want some of her own.*

*In the meantime I need something to look forward to. How about just you and me going to France in the spring, with no children to encumber us?*



## A summer in Argyll

JOHN AND I reckoned that our jalopy had served its purpose, for example by taking the knock when I backed it into a tree when practising the famous three point turn, and we thought we were now quite good drivers. We wanted something a little more reliable and comfortable for the longer trips we were contemplating. John never had the interest in cars that some of his friends did, but he thought that something a little more stylish would be in order. It wasn't all that easy to buy a new car at that time, and we got much contradictory advice on what to do, but we settled, to the freely expressed surprise of our families and friends, for a Ford, and were eventually so pleased with it that we have stuck with that marque ever since. We had to order it months in advance, and bow to Henry Ford's famous dictum, which had been given a new lease of life during and after the war, and accept a boring black one. At least we had just enough time to run it in before the 1947 summer vacation.

My mother was easily persuaded to undertake another short visit to Argyll at Easter. She said she was bored with being in an empty house all day. She also had her own small car now, and it was a much easier journey across country from Kirkton than it was by train and bus all the way round through Edinburgh and Glasgow. So I got her to contact the lawyer in advance, and to arrange a visit to the house with the small “builder and joiner” whom he had previously recommended.

I explained that I was cooking up a big plan for the summer, but I would like some work to be done in advance, specifically to make any necessary repairs to the fabric of the house and the furniture, plumbing and sanitation, as well as the electricity system – it had benefited, along with the nearby village, from a rural electrification scheme, when the Ben Cruachan power station was commissioned. No painting and decorating, and no work on the grounds. She should go with them and draw up a list of all that had to be done, and get the lawyer to make a contract. As much as possible was to be done by the end of June, and at least by that date the house was to be habitable. All this she did, and she thought the contractor seemed a very reliable sort of man, who would do his best, especially if he got the idea that further work would follow.

That year saw the end of formal education for Ann and Maggie, although their friends David and Bill had one more year of their longer course still to do. With the permission of the College – very willingly given – each of the boys had

produced an embroidery pattern a year in advance, as well as submitting his own architectural design for the annual exhibition. In this way the boys got what they wanted, something that they said “belonged to the mid-twentieth century”. The girls gave them the necessary technical advice as to what was practicable in the time available, and both of the resulting pieces attracted much favourable comment. They appealed to people of all ages.

All four of them had taken to coming to tea with us from time to time. No doubt Mary was the main attraction for the girls, and perhaps it was my cooking that brought the boys, but I think they liked to talk to John as well, and sometimes to pick his brains on the history of their subject. They claimed to be out-and-out modernists, but I noticed, for example, that the quite unfashionable topic of domes got their full attention, when John expounded on it. I realized, but I doubt if they ever did, that he was using them as guinea pigs, to hone his abilities as a teacher.

On a carefully calculated date in May, I sprung my big plan on them. John and I were going to close down our flat, and take the baby and the cat, and a heap of baggage, to Argyll, for the whole of the summer vacation. If they were interested, I could provide a working holiday for all of them, and they could even ask around and see if a few of their friends might also be interested. Free board, lodgings and travel. Beer in what I considered reasonable quantity. And £20 each to take back to Edinburgh. Much of the work would be hard and dirty. Each day one of them would help

in the kitchen. The day would run from eight to four, with short breaks for refreshments and lunch. A working week of five and a half days. The late afternoons and evenings would be theirs to do what they liked with, and we did have a nice little beach. There would be a radio and a gramophone in the house. We would have to insist on strict segregation in dormitory style accommodation after ten o'clock. John would not be participating in the work, or at least not full time, but I would. Anybody who wasn't enjoying it, or who was not doing a proper share, could or would have their railway fare back to Edinburgh at any time.

Just as I had calculated, the two girls accepted immediately, and the two boys then also said yes. As to other people, they could think of two or three possible takers. I told them I would need to know very soon, so that I could arrange for things like bedding and work tools in appropriate numbers. A couple of days later they told me they had found four very suitable recruits, who also came in twos: Bob and Jenny, Andrew and May. I asked them to bring their friends for tea, not so much to inquire into their capacity – they were all said to be young and fit – as to make sure they understood my conditions.

Then, out of the blue, Jim made what was to be the most helpful offer of them all. John had told him what was going on, and he said he didn't like the idea of this bunch of amateurs being let loose with dangerous tools. He had picked up a lot of different skills over the years, and could give them some basic training on the use of axes, saws,

etc. There was even a right and a wrong way of using a simple spade! And even since he took to making dolls' houses he had learned a lot about paint and painting, for example. He and Marjory could take a fortnight off at the beginning of our time in Argyll, and he would leave the dolls' houses to his assistant. Both of them needed a break, and would like to see this fabled country house in the Highlands. "By the way", he added, "Marjory will see to a first-aid box, if you like".

My mother said it would be a pleasure for her to have one more visit in June, to check up on the repair work, and to place orders in Oban for my long lists of stores to be delivered, and even to stay on until they had come, and help the housekeeper to sort out what went in the bedrooms, the kitchen, and the storeroom for tools. She said it wasn't always easy to deal with such things these days, but she liked being useful and she loved the place, even when it rained, as it did rather a lot. She would like to come and go, and she hoped she could persuade my father to come as well, to see how my plan worked out.

This last preliminary move prompted John to say that he would volunteer to take on a key job – one that he could most easily fit in with his studies. He would be my store-keeper, and he knew how these things were done in the army, in what was really a very sensible way, that could easily be adapted to my small work unit. He thought in fact that much of it was due to none other than Florence Nightingale.

My father put in a word to ask if I had considered that some of the work – with axes, for example – could be dangerous, and I should ask the lawyer to advise on what my liabilities would be. The lawyer said it would be best to get each participant to sign a paper saying that he or she was attending this work camp at their own risk ... etc. In practice, he added, if you get any injuries attended to promptly, and provided they are not too serious, it is most unlikely that you'll have any legal trouble.

We packed them off on the first Monday that all of them said they would be free to go – ten people and a large collection of bits and pieces of equipment, as well as groceries to see us started, filling a hired bus. John and I, Mary, and the cat, who had acquired the improbable name of Ting, followed in our car, equally laden. Our baggage included a fair sized box of John's reading matter for the summer. We called in at the Anderson house to pick up Mrs Anderson's thoughtful and generous contribution – picnic food and drink for the whole party, with whom we had arranged a rendezvous at a place near the north end of Loch Lomond. The bus driver had agreed that this route, although it meant crossing Glasgow, was on balance the best one. The weather was holding up well, so we all enjoyed our picnic, and I warned them that it was the last luxury they would have for the next three months.

I saw my job in two parts. In the evenings I would do the planning and see to any paperwork, and in working hours I would supervise, and lend a hand wherever I could help most. We arrived with plenty of daylight hours to spare,

so while all our goods were being unloaded I had a quick look around with the housekeeper, to see what my mother had achieved with the contractor and his men, and directed the party to their dormitory style sleeping quarters.

My mother had prepared rooms for Jim and Marjory and for John and me, and she had appropriated what she said had “always” been her room, for herself to use on her next visit. Ann undertook to see that things were sorted out for our evening meal, and Marjory distributed bedding. John took note of where everything was going and said he would set up his storekeeping system the next day.

After I had attended to Mary’s needs John took her in charge, and I left them all to get on with it, while I set off with Jim to get some rough idea of what we were going to have to do during our whole stay, and to choose what we would start on the next day. He and I continued this practice throughout his fortnight, after which I did it on my own, usually with John just to keep me company, and we also always had Plan B for bad weather, when there was no shortage of painting jobs indoors. The object was to preserve the woodwork and metal work, rather than to redecorate, but we thought that some of the work done would survive the planned transformation to a hotel.

I have often wondered, ever since, what we would have done without Jim. He seemed to be indispensable as a trainer and organizer, and by the time he and Marjory left for home he had things running like a well oiled machine. We took them to Oban railway station on their last

Saturday, and said they would always be our most welcome guests, even if they didn't do a stroke of work on their future visits. They had joined the rest of the gang on the beach every afternoon and evening, and we thought they actually looked a lot the better for this open air life. It was interrupted by only a few days of rain, when the evenings, in the big sitting room, generally became musical in one way or another.

The result was almost everything we had hoped for. The grounds were all neatly laid out, the drives and paths had their ditches, and places had been marked out and where appropriate dug over, for flower beds and lawns. There were no dead or damaged trees or shrubs – they had produced a large stack of firewood.

Everything was ready for next spring, when we would have a big planting programme for trees, shrubs, hedges and perennial flowering plants, and for seeding lawn grass. We would have to get expert advice on all this, and find sources for the plant material, and we would need to get someone – from the village if we could find one – to take charge of it all. Even before then we might be able to get a contractor to surface the drives, either with tarmacadam or with a good layer of gravel.

Building work could start with a small modern house for ourselves. Until it was built we would use the old house. If all went well we could then take the crucial step of making the alterations needed to turn the old house into a small, luxurious hotel. In about eighteen months or two years from



now, we thought, we could be in business. The county planners had advised us that if we could convince them that the hotel would attract people with dollars to spend, it would greatly speed up the issue of the permits that would be needed.

We had discussed architecture with David and Bill. They told us that if we liked to try something they would produce plans that they could submit as the practical work that was demanded by the College for their final exams. David said that for example he could design the new house, and Bill the restructuring of the old one. I suggested they might like to toss a coin, but Bill said that if David was happy to do the house, the reconstruction job would suit him very well. If we accepted the designs we could pay them a fee, and if we didn't they could still hand them into the College.

They took measurements and made sketch plans of where the new house was to go, and we discussed at great length and in minute detail just what we wanted for both of the works. David said that soon after we got back to Edinburgh he would produce a sketch to show us what the new house would look like, but Bill said that he couldn't do a great deal, other than the drawings that would show the altered floor plans and other changes needed to create an efficient and comfortable hotel.

I also told Ann and Maggie that if they were still free to do so in about a year's time I would take them on to do everything needed for all the soft furnishings. The hard furniture would be partly standard hotel beds, etc, and partly what

we could find in the way of suitable antiques, including a few items that my grandfather had put into the house long ago. The things that had been stored away included a number of pictures that would suit us very well. Bill said his designs would include major items of hotel equipment, like cooking stoves, and central heating.

I found that wrestling with all these plans, and their financial implications, was just what I had expected it to be, and revelled in it all. I had found my *métier*.

My father, who had spent all his working life very successfully building on existing foundations, even when the war had driven major changes, was worried by what he could see was something of a gamble, and didn't really believe me when I assured him that I was well aware of it, and that I was prepared to accept that it might fail. He did, however, accept my assurance that I was doing all this on my Campbell inheritance, and that all the Stewart side of things would be kept separate, and safe.

One of his efforts to bring me down to earth was to ask the obvious question: who was I aiming at as hotel guests? But I did have an answer ready. That had always been the big issue in developing tourism in the Highlands, I said. Much of it simply closed down for half the year. But I wanted to have a go at running a year-round hotel. In the summer months it would be much like the others, except perhaps that by offering a high standard I could attract more people from the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. But for the winter, I had had an idea. It had struck me that

this was an absolutely perfect place for honeymoons, and I thought that if we could advertise it cleverly enough, our hotel might take off, and get a name for itself. That conversation has turned out to represent one of my best predictions ever, and the continuing financial success of this, our first venture, has depended on it. Our winter profits are less than our summer ones, but to run a hotel at any profit at all in winter, in a remote corner of Argyll, has been good enough for me. And it amuses me that we have become, in our tiny way, and mainly for the winter season, the Scottish equivalent of Niagara Falls, if not quite Venice.

## A holiday for two

**M**R ANDERSON asked his wife what she would like to do for a holiday. “This time”, he said, “it’s your choice”. She replied, however, that she had a suggestion that she thought would be a good one for both of them. “Neither of us has ever seen the Mediterranean”, she said, “and if we went by car in May it all ought to be fairly quiet, so we probably wouldn’t need any bookings, and we could just move around as we felt like it. And it shouldn’t be too hot at that time. We could see just a little of some of the main places, like Cannes and Nice and Monte Carlo – maybe go on into Italy if we have any energy left. I’ll ask some of my friends if there are any places they would particularly recommend. Can we have a whole month?”

For several successive spring weekends they both put in a lot of time in their garden, with help from Jim and Marjory, so that they wouldn’t come home to find it full of weeds. Marjory promised to look after their lettuces and other sowings.

And then off they went. They debated whether to take turns at driving, but agreed that she was an expert pilot, and that he didn't mind driving for long stretches, so he took the wheel which, he thought to himself, was really how it should be.

They spent a night at Knutsford. "Why Knutsford?" he had asked her. "Two reasons", she said, "One, I've got what I think should be a good recommendation to stay at an old style English pub that has a few rooms, and two, the town is the original of Cranford – although I don't suppose we can do much exploring on a one-night stop. And actually there's a third point, but I don't know anything about it: Knut is 'Canute', the famous Danish king. But one of the things I looked up said there may not have been any real connection with him". He admitted that although he knew quite a lot about King Knut, he had never read *Cranford*. But at least he had heard of it.

When they got there the pub keeper had some information to offer. Some of what were supposed to be the originals of the houses mentioned by Mrs Gaskell were close by, and he could point out one or two of them before they left next morning. They might in any case enjoy a short stroll through the town. "But", he said, "I can tell you it's a very different sort of town nowadays".

Both of them actually liked sea passages, so they took one of the longer ones, to St Malo. From his maps Mr Anderson had seen that if you drew a straight line from there to anywhere on the Côte d'Azur, it went very close to the Dumont's place. Mrs Anderson had written to Elizabeth and explained that they would be making their way across

France. They didn't want to stay long, she said, just a couple of nights to meet her parents-in-law, see how Jean-Paul was coming along, and satisfy their curiosity about this paradise, which had so impressed Elizabeth's other visitors.

A reply had come, saying that they were welcome to stay as long as they liked, but they held fast to their planned one day and two nights. The visit went off very well and they said they would take good reports of the baby back to Scotland, backed by Mr Anderson's photographs of him. Elizabeth was looking as beautiful as ever, and told them that she was expecting her second baby in August. "Once I get over the early stages, it seems to agree with me" she said. "I hope it's a girl this time". She showed them the work she was doing on the library, and Mr Anderson said he wasn't often envious of anybody, but how he wished now that he had had an opportunity like this, when he was her age. He hoped John could come back soon and see more of M. Dumont, in whom he had obviously found a kindred spirit, in spite of the great difference in age.

Three weeks later, Mrs Anderson remarked that she could remember hearing someone in Germany, before the Great War, singing Goethe's song *Kennst du das Land ...*, and wondering why her parents didn't take her to Italy. "It's taken a long time to get here", she said, "but you may not be able to get me to go back to Scotland now. This is the life for me". They had worked their way all along the French Riviera, with the bright blue Mediterranean nearly always in sight, under a warm sun that had shone all day and every day without fail, and she had wandered through the main market of each of the big towns. They had made some

surprising discoveries – for example that Monte Carlo was not exclusively inhabited by millionaires, and that you could sit and sip your coffee right down by the harbour for much less than it would have been in a less attractive location in Paris. They hadn't set foot in the famous casino, but Mr Anderson had been greatly taken by the marine museum.

They had lingered in Genoa, and decided that they had seldom had food more to their taste – at amazingly low cost. Mr Anderson said that you should always remember that it was the Italians who had taught the French to cook. And the wine wasn't bad either. Next time they should go much further into Italy. And now they were in Rapallo, which they had reached by a rather too exciting drive along a narrow, overcrowded road that wound through villages and under great cliffs. They realized sadly that the time had come to head for home.

They studied their maps, and decided that it should be easy enough to go north over the Alps. They would avoid Germany, but go back into France. To keep within the limits set by the bank they would only just have enough time, so they pushed on, over the mountains to Milan, over the Simplon and through the mainly French-speaking part of Switzerland, over the Jura Mountains and then, keeping well to the North to avoid Paris, on to Calais and Dover. Mr Anderson said that there hadn't been a single day along this route when they hadn't seen places he'd like to come back to. His wife said she had caught the travelling bug as well, but she thought they should choose a good centre next time and really get to know some particular locality. "And", she said, "I want to brush up my Italian". He replied that John's

friend Dr Scott would say there is only one place to do that. And she might be right – in fact, what was he saying, of course she *would* be right.

Oddly enough, when John came with Alison and the baby the next day, one of their main bits of news concerned the selfsame Dr Scott. “She’s getting married – to an Italian. Well, sort of. He was actually born in Edinburgh, but his family are all real Italians. There’s quite a colony of them in Edinburgh, you know”.

**Pillow talk**

*How old do you think she is?*

*Who?*

*Miss Scott of course. Don’t be provoking.*

*Your guess is as good as mine. Better probably.*

*I think she must have been at least twenty-five when we first knew her. That means she’s well up in her thirties now.*

*Better late than never.*

*I suppose so, but she’s left it a bit late to be starting a family.*

*Probably not too late. And she’s managed to have a good go at a career first.*

*I prefer my way. Don’t forget I’ve had two spells of work, and raised three children in between.*



*I'm not likely to forget. Especially if you're going to go on reminding me. How much do we know of the lucky man?*

*John says he is doing a PhD. In fact he has done it, and will be collecting it at this year's graduation ceremonies, which will be quite soon. The wedding is in early July, and then I think we can guess where the honeymoon will be. John says he is about the same age as her, and has been a school teacher at some boarding school in England. Now he'll be hoping for a university job. His family has plenty of money. I don't know where he got all this information, but I think in fact they are fairly well known. It's just that we are out of touch with some parts of Edinburgh society.*

*We must get her a nice wedding present.*

*Maybe you can see to that. I don't know how much we should spend on it.*

## Plans

ANN AND MAGGIE followed their summer in Argyll with a few weeks in France, picking grapes for the Dumonts. While they were away the two boys spent a great deal of their free time in our flat. Their heads – and mine too, for that matter – were full of the plans for Argyll.

I told David that apart from my list of wants for the new house, I didn't want to be involved in it until he had something on paper, particularly a sketch of how it would look from the outside, which of course he couldn't really do until he had its inside set out in some detail. As a would be hotelier I was in any case rather more interested in Bill's part of the work. David joined in discussing it. He said three heads were better than two, which I am sure they were.

One apparently trifling point had actually been bothering me since the very beginning, but it was David who brought it up. "What are you going to *call* the hotel?" he asked. "I've been trying to decide by reasoning it out, as John would do", I said, "but I'm not getting anywhere". I had in

fact made one decision – it was to be in the English language. None of us except my mother had any Gaelic beyond a few common politenesses, and it seemed dishonest to use it for this purpose. Many Gaelic words, in any case, had the disadvantage of confronting English speakers with a pronunciation problem, and we would be depending a great deal on getting the hotel talked about. All the local place names were in Gaelic, so they were equally ruled out. Something on the lines of “Sea View” would have fitted the facts very well, but I didn’t want anything as banal as that.

Bill said he had heard the village people referring to the old place as “Campbell House” – which he had thought rather odd in itself, since at least half of them seemed to be Campbells and had houses of their own. I said, with a faint attempt at humour, that we didn’t want to drive away all potential guests who were burdened with the name of Macdonald, which was a very large number, both in the home country and in the diaspora. So *not* “The Campbell Hotel”!

I supposed that they didn’t know the stories, but in this matter of names John and I had our curious Burns connection, which I explained briefly. And even more curiously my mother, “Bonny Mary,” had one too, and you could even say it had been passed on to my daughter. Given that Burns had the place he did in the Scottish pantheon, something taken from his works or his biography might be a good idea, but although I had racked my memory, I

hadn't come up with anything so far. Actually his biography wouldn't help much, as all the place names he was associated with were in Ayrshire and Dumfriesshire, and it would strike most people as a bit strange to find one of them in Argyll.

David said he had been trying to think if the site itself had anything to suggest a name, and he had remembered one thing. There was a tree that had survived the army's occupation – a quite exceptionally big rowan tree. What about "The Rowan Tree Hotel". I said he might be on to something. What did the others think? Someone said it would be better without the "Tree" – just "The Rowan Hotel". Otherwise it would be like the chocolate firm, Rowntree (which in those days was the main rival to Cadbury).

This stirred John, who had just joined us by the fireside, to say: "What about Gowan – or Gowans? – Burns has a line in *Auld Lang Syne* about a couple, quite like John Anderson and his friend in fact, who had 'run about the braes, and pou'd the gowans fine'. There seems to be some doubt about what a 'gowan' is or was. In Kirkton it's certainly a marguerite, or ox-eye daisy, but my old English teacher said that the original title of *To a Mountain-daisy* had been *The Gowan*, and that Burns's epithet 'crimson-tipped' can only mean that it was an ordinary daisy like the ones on lawns. And other sources say it used to be applied to just about any white or yellow flower".

David said rather drily (did he really know what he was up against?) that in spite of all this literary erudition, he

preferred Rowan, and accepted that it was better without the “Tree”. Bill joined in to support him, leaving me in a quandary. But I was rescued by my Jo himself, who must have been watching my face. “I was only showing off”, he said, “it must have been the rhyme that triggered it. Actually I agree that Rowan is the better choice”. “All right then”, I said, “unless someone comes up with something better, it’s The Rowan Hotel.

It was John, of course, who thought of doing some “obvious” research, from which he soon discovered that there was already a Rowan Hotel in Oban, so that name was not really available. He tried not to look too smug that were back with his suggestion, and that we settled for Gowan. It did have the advantage, for those of us who were in the know, of keeping up the Burns connection. The dictionaries gave various stories, but he didn’t see why we shouldn’t simply take it as a synonym for the marguerite. Until he had started to dig into the dictionaries he had always assumed that that was what Burns had had in mind, and it did seem to fit best with the words “pou’d the gowans fine”. So if we wanted a picture to go with the name we could get one of the artists in the family to do one of the marguerite.

There was no doubt in *my* mind that a well chosen name was of real importance, but we moved on to supposedly more serious matters, trying to settle some of the main features of the hotel building scheme. It would be in two parts, first a major restructuring of the interior, and then the

addition of a wing on each side. The house stood on a sort of natural terrace and there was space to build on to each side of it. It had two stories, so we thought that by putting three rooms on each floor of the new wings, and three more on the upper floor of the old house, we could have fifteen all together. The front part of the present ground floor would make a nice big lounge, and all the rest, including the dining room, staff quarters, and the working parts of a hotel, could be at the back. "The absolute priority", I said, "is for every guest room to have a view of the sea. No one will want anything else. Otherwise it's up to Bill to see how it can all be done. Some of it, like staff quarters, could even be in separate buildings if that seems best – and we should count on employing some local people. We can go on discussing it as the main outlines emerge. I do have a lot of ideas for the kitchen, and for a few details like having a big fireplace in the sitting room, as well as efficient central heating. If my plan is to work it has to be a warm and welcoming place, even in winter".

On this basis, the two of them went to work, and by the time of the College's annual exhibition they each had something to put on display – which of course gave us some free publicity, and also a good reaction from the County Council people, who were really almost as keen as I was that Argyll should acquire another high-class hotel, even if it was just a very small one.

My father was in Edinburgh on business, and came and had lunch with us. After we had said all there was to say

about his granddaughter, I discussed the hotel plans with him and he said he didn't want to get mixed up in it, but that as far as he could see we were probably on to a good thing. "Try and get a few good youngish assistants to work for you", was his main advice. He could recommend some public relations people, but it was too early for that. "The public has a short attention span," he said. "If you plant something in the magazines this year they will have forgotten all about it by the time you open for business. If you get a small, very good hotel up and running, you can almost depend on people telling their friends about it, for your ordinary summer business, but if you want to get this honeymoon idea off to a good start you'll need some really appropriate PR".

My mother asked what she could do next, and I said there wasn't a great deal until we did the planting in the late winter or early spring. We had asked around and been told that there were no big commercial tree nurseries anywhere near, and that we would do best to get them from as far away as Aberdeenshire. The cost of transport would be low in relation to the cost of the plants – one small lorry load would be all we needed – but the practical difficulty would be to ensure that everything was well timed and that the plants were properly looked after. My mother said that if I could supply a list of what we wanted she would go to the Aberdeenshire place and see what could be done. She sent us an estimate of the cost, and said that this place could only supply "forestry" trees. The manager had advised her that the best place for "ornamentals" was

Edinburgh, and that we might do better to get what we wanted from there. “Make sure you don’t get both lots at the same time!” he had told her.

One job that would need to be seen to before then would be to put our boundary deer-proof fence and gates in good order. She made another visit – very willingly as always – to Argyll, located a full-time self-employed fencer, took him to the site, and made a contract to renovate the fence, which in fact meant almost completely replacing it with a new one. She did the same with our builder, and made a contract for new gateposts and a high wrought-iron gate. He pointed out that the best thing for pedestrians would be a smaller gate set into the big one, so we reluctantly abandoned the plan for a rowan arch.

Then the other thing we managed to arrange for was the surfacing of the drive. We decided to do it with gravel for the present, and then maybe once the building work was over, we could replace it with asphalt. So all we had to do was buy gravel by the lorry load and dump it at intervals along the drive. We found two men in the village who apparently lived by taking short-term jobs like this, and contracted with them to spread it neatly. We told them there would be a lot of tree planting early in the year, and we could take them on again for that, along with one or two others if they knew of any.

We got the boys to hurry along with drawings that would do to get planning permission, and also estimates from the Oban builder, whom we had come to rely on to do good



work. They also made beautifully finished versions for the College exhibition. David's was the simpler of the two exercises, but it did attract attention for the clever way he had coped with the post-war difficulties. We had worked it out among us that the best way was to make our house a very plain old-fashioned building. Natural stone was out of the question, and we didn't want any kind of artificial substitute or stone "facing", but preferred cavity brick walls, made to conform with the appearance of at least some of the local traditional houses, by covering the brickwork with harled plaster, and whitewashed. It was to be set at some considerable distance from the hotel, on a site with a similar view out over the sea.

We got the boys to bill us at normal professional rates. As we had discussed things step by step there could in the end have been no question of rejecting their efforts, but just to be on the safe side we got an architect who had worked for my father to vet them. He said that he was most impressed, and could find nothing wrong, and neither could the planning authority. So we managed to get the actual work started in July of 1948.

The exhibits at the College attracted some professional attention, partly because the lecturer who had supervised the boys' work was a youngish man who had had his career interrupted by the war, and who was now making a name for himself as a practising architect as well as a teacher. The boys said they couldn't grudge him his share in the attention, as he had been extraordinarily helpful. In fact they,

and therefore we, had been lucky in having his participation.

We had had some rather impracticable ideas for building all or part of the house first and then the hotel, but our builder came up with a much better scheme. His business was expanding and he said it made more sense to concentrate on this one site and do the two parts of the work concurrently. There was just enough flat space behind the old house to put up temporary accommodation in the form of a long, narrow wooden hut, making use of the existing water and sewage installations. If we agreed, his foreman would appreciate having a small room in it. Some of his men would be using a caravan, and some could find accommodation in the village. He himself would make day trips from Oban – “I’m used to very early rising”, he said.

We seemed to be on course for a hotel opening in the spring of 1950, a bit later than my earlier optimistic estimates, but if we got off to a really good start that year I thought I couldn’t complain.

## Life moves on

**I**N JULY of 1947, those of the family who knew her were invited to Dr Scott's wedding, but the only ones who would have wanted to go were John and Alison. They were away in Argyll and decided it wasn't worth all the travel, just to come to a wedding which wasn't even in the family, and where they wouldn't know anybody except the bride, so presents were sent in the names of "The Andersons" and "The Stewarts", and that was all, except that John wrote to felicitate her, and apologize for his absence. He hoped to see her and meet her husband in the autumn term.

Towards the end of August, news came of Elizabeth's second baby, a girl as she had been hoping. She was to be baptized just plain Marie, which was her French grandmother's name, and Philippe said he thought it wouldn't cause much confusion with young Mary in Edinburgh. Mr Forbes had saved up his holiday-time allowance from the bank so that he and his wife could have a whole fortnight in France.

Ann and Maggie came home full of stories about how the vendange was conducted and about Elizabeth and the baby Marie. After that they worked away in the Anderson house at their embroidery, in the hope that one of the specialist art shops in Edinburgh's New Town might buy (or at least help them to sell) their productions. They decided not to part with their student exhibition pieces. It was accepted by their families that they need not try to find "proper jobs" in the meantime. They had the prospect of some paid work for the hotel. The boys would be graduating in 1948, and if they could find work, which in fact should be easy enough, they could all think of getting married in the fairly near future. They hoped they would all end up in the same place, or near enough.

The Andersons had a letter from Dr White, asking if he and Mrs White could come for lunch with their daughter and her husband in their car, and suggesting a weekday that would in fact be just after the girls came back from France. They would particularly like to meet all three of the younger Andersons, the two young wives, and the Edinburgh granddaughter. Adding them up, and not forgetting Maggie, that meant quite a party, but Mrs Anderson thought they could manage it, and when the day came, she laid on a suitable spread.

They arrived early, so they were taken on a brief visit to the workshop and were given a highly privileged view of how the dolls' houses were developing. Then Marjory came in from her driving instruction work and was introduced, and John came, saying he had no afternoon classes that day, and Alison arrived with Mary. After lunch the White's

daughter said she would just have time to give her husband a glimpse of Edinburgh's old town. He was a southerner and had never been this far north before in all his life. He had been surprised, when he first came to Northumberland, to read an account of John Knox's connections with that part of England, and would like to see a little of the places more usually associated with him – not that he could find much to like about the man.

The old gentleman, now looking just slightly more aged, settled down for a talk with John, with Mr Anderson for once almost entirely reduced to the role of listener – but it has to be said, an interested and well informed one. John was now in the third year of his four-year MA course, but Dr White said it wasn't too early to be thinking about the next stage. He was greatly intrigued by the Dumont connection, and thought John should seize the opportunity it offered. Probably it would pay to get back there quite soon and see if Elizabeth was finding much among her document collection. Maybe next Easter for example?

He wished he could come too, but he wasn't really up to so much travel any more. And then, rather surprisingly, he said he thought John should stick with Edinburgh for his PhD. He has been most impressed by some work he had recently seen emanating from the newly invigorated History Department, and he was sure John could find a good supervisor. And there were two things to be taken into account. A large part of your studies for a PhD could be done wherever you wanted to be at the time. And if he set about it the right way he could make use of library resources elsewhere, like Oxford or Paris, for example.

John said he was beginning to see possibilities for an ideal life, based on their planned main residence in Argyll and their flat in Edinburgh, with forays into England and France. “And even America” the old scholar said, enigmatically, but with remarkable prescience. He pointed out that if you were doing a PhD you had to be careful not to publish anything that would forestall your thesis, but that you could start – and it was almost expected of you – to write occasional papers on less directly relevant discoveries, or for example reviews of other people’s work. “And do keep in touch”, he said “I have very high expectations for you. And these contacts with the young keep me going”.

John had wondered about asking Dr Scott – she seemed to be using her unmarried name for professional purposes – to join the party, but had decided that that would only get in the way, when he really wanted to hear what Dr White had to say. He saw her quite often at the university, although he was no longer attending her classes, so he invited her to bring her husband to lunch and meet Mary at their flat the following Sunday.

He told her about Dr White’s visit and she said “Oh, why didn’t you tell me – I would so like to meet him!”, so John had to explain that their lunch party had already stretched the Anderson resources to the limit. “But if you like”, he said, “Alison and I could probably take you and your husband on a car outing down through the borders some Sunday – better leave it until the spring, though – if you can put up with having both Mary and Ting in the car”. She looked to her husband for his approval, and then said she thought that would make a really good outing.

Christmas 1947 was a repeat of the 1946 one, and all agreed that if anything it was more succesful, and once again Ann and Maggie went off for the New Year partying in Inverness-shire.

Mr and Mrs Anderson decided that they couldn't afford foreign travel every year, and that they would do better to have a really good visit to Italy in 1949, so at Easter 1948 they did what they had often proposed but never got round to, and went on a short visit to Argyll, where they had the great plan explained to them, and thought it all seemed like a good idea.

**Pillow talk**

*Who would ever have thought that a son of mine would go cat daft?*

*You have to admit that it's an amusing little animal. Have you seen it doing somersaults?*

*Yes, and it's true, as he says, that cat and baby do seem to go together. I just hope that the next addition to the family is to be a human one.*

*He's probably scared to tell you, but he's taken Ting to be mated at some cat breeder's, a woman in Peebles. She told him that Ting has all the right features, so now he's wondering if he can start a new pedigree line.*

*Not in the flat, I hope.*

*No – he has a great scheme for a “cattery” as an adjunct to the hotel, for breeding Siamese. He has even found a girl in the village who is as daft as he is, who would be a partner in the venture, and run it while he’s not there. He’s going to put David to work to design a miniature replica of the main hotel frontage, behind which half a dozen cats can be isolated when they are mating.*

*I don’t suppose they have said anything lately about human reproduction?*

*I was coming to that. Alison says she is pregnant, and that the baby should arrive in November. She’s going to tell young Mary about it and try to get her to take a friendly interest.*

*And I suppose the two grandmothers will be competing as to who is going to take over while Madame is being a business woman.*

*I wouldn’t let that worry you. All three of us get along very well. I just hope that Marjory is also going to get into the act soon.*



# Building

WE WONDERED what you were supposed to do about laying a foundation stone, when in fact the work began with demolition, and would continue, not on a new foundation, but based on a substantial part of the old one. We decided to settle for a small plaque to be put up inside the new building when it was finished, that would give a very brief history of the old house.

I made as much as I could of being half a Campbell myself, and tried to adapt myself to local ways, which were certainly very different from those of Kirkton. Simple common sense told me that the last thing I should do was antagonize the locals by trying to hurry things along, and in the end I found that our builder knew how to get things done, in his seemingly very relaxed west Highland way. It was not long before the old house had been reduced to little more than its main outside walls, the roof slates neatly stacked

for re-use – to be supplemented by more, that he acquired from a dealer in such things, taken from demolished buildings, and he bought more of them for the roof of the new house. Some of the old woodwork, as indicated in Bill's plans, was also piled up, carefully protected by tarpaulins.

Work was also going ahead on schedule at the new house, and I could soon exercise my imagination by looking at the layout of its rooms as it started to arise. When its walls were up, the bricklayers were moved to the hotel site to start work on the new wings and the internal walls. As autumn turned to winter we lost time when the weather made work difficult or impossible, but we had known this would be the case, and had allowed for it. If you live or work on the west coast you don't expect dry sunny winters, and we were agreeably surprised when we did get some good spells. It was seldom really cold, and we had no snow at all.

Now that a new baby was on the way it didn't seem likely that I would be coming with John in his Christmas vacation, but my mother kept up her visits – she insisted that she had nothing better to do, and that my father was perfectly capable of looking after himself for a few days at a time.

I had gone with John to take Ting to be mated with a pedigree Siamese in Peebles, and the tom-cat's owner had told us how you could eventually start a pedigree line, after a few well documented generations. It would be much easier to start with a pair of pedigreed cats, she

said, but John had got some bee in his bonnet about the value of occasional outbreeding, and said it would give him a new interest to start with Ting. He would keep the best of her female kittens and find homes for the rest. The first litter would have to be raised in Edinburgh, but later he wanted to set things up properly in Argyll. He had found a cat-loving girl through her father in our village, and thought he could take her on as a business partner. "Only a business one, I hope", I said, and immediately wished I hadn't. We didn't make jokes like that, he told me, but if I liked he would introduce me to her and her fiancé at the same time.

We had all gone, of course, to the Art College exhibition and graduation, and had met the boys' parents for the first time, at yet another lunch party organized by the ever hospitable Anderson parents. Maggie's parents also came down from Kirkton. It now seemed to be accepted that the two girls and the two boys had their "understandings" although they were not formally engaged. There was a lot of talk about what they were all going to do, and I think there were the first glimmerings of the idea that eventually took hold, that the four of them might set themselves up as a "design" group. The immediate outcome, however, was that the boys took the jobs with an architects' firm in Edinburgh, for which the College had recommended them.

Mrs Anderson said that unfortunately it just wouldn't be right for them to live in her house along with the girls, and in any case she was running out of space. I took John aside

and with no hesitation he agreed that we should offer them our twin-bedded spare room. We had chosen a flat that had one more room than we needed for ourselves and Mary (plus the next one), and had furnished it for visitors, but had never had occasion to use it, and now thought we probably never would. The boys accepted with alacrity, on condition that we charged them for board and lodging at the going rate. They said that they liked both our baby and our cat, as well as my cooking.

I told them they mustn't distract John from his studies – I was already beginning to feel like the “guardian” that, according to some accounts, I later became. He was entering his final year, and it was vital that he didn't just get a degree, but that he should get a very good one. And so the expanded Anderson family was all set for its next expansion. Maggie and Bill would in effect also be a part of it, even if there were no legal or blood relationship – “so far” as John remarked in prophetic mood. The girls were invited by the boys' parents to go north with them for the rest of that July, and came back full of wonder at the contrast it made with its mid-winter darkness, and what an attractive part of Scotland it was. They wouldn't mind living up there, they said, and that was in fact what they eventually did, when they retired.

I had my second baby at home, following the rule then current – I don't know if it still applies – that only the first was born in the “Simpson”. It was a boy, to be called James. His very first visitors, of course, were Mary and John.

Christmas 1948 went according to the “tradition” established just two years before, and once more Ann and Maggie went off to the now dark, but very cheerful Highlands for the New Year.

Jim reported that the entire stock-pile of House No. 1 was sold out, and that in the new year his little factory would have two production lines hard at it turning out more of No. 1, and an equal number of No. 2, while his “R & D department” in the garden shed worked on the prototype for a little one-room country school – it would be a relatively simple toy, and would sell for a price that should attract many buyers – which it did, especially by Christmas 1949, by which time work was well advanced on the prototype of a hotel. The company could see that Jim was on to something, especially when some similar (but, of course, inferior) toys began to appear. They encouraged him to move to a bigger factory and to take on more workers.

## An old interest renewed

**I**N 1949, IN JANUARY, when nothing happens in Edinburgh, John put it to his father that if he really wanted to get the most out of a visit to Italy, he should think back to that famous visit to Fontainebleau. It was hard to believe that it was only just twelve years ago – it now seemed as if we were living in a different world. All of Mr Anderson's careful research and planning had paid off most handsomely. Did he realize that for this new venture they had a good source of information just waiting to be tapped? How would it be if he asked Dr Scott and her husband to Sunday lunch, to have her brain picked?

Before we go any further, it is really necessary to remind anyone who knows Florence now, some sixty years later, that it was very different in 1949. Some would say that in those days it was an attractive, reasonable, and inexpensive place to visit, or even to go and live in for a while, just as it had been for centuries. Nowadays it is still a place that you must see, but you have to be more tolerant of gross overcrowding and overcharging, even if you can mitigate the worst of it all by choosing your time of year, and finding

accommodation well outside the city. And even in those days, as their lunch guests were at pains to emphasize, it was important to realize that Tuscany has much more to offer than just Florence.

Dr Scott's husband was now known to John as "Andrea". He explained on this second visit to the Anderson parents, that while many of the Edinburgh Italian families came from the south, his was actually of Genoese origin. Mrs Anderson got a word in at that point, to say how much they had liked that city on their brief visit in 1947.

The family had had a thriving import business, dealing in Italian wines, cheese, leather goods and silks, but fortunately had diversified their range of commodities and their sources well before the "second" war. He had been born in Scotland, and that was why he had been baptized Andrea, although it was also a popular name in Genoa. Apart from this mention of his baptism, nobody said anything about religion, and John recalled that the wedding invitation, rather curiously, had only been to a reception. His parents ("for snobbish reasons", he said) had sent him to an English public school, and after he had taken his MA at Edinburgh he had returned to teach in that same school. He had spent the war years in the RAF (mostly on the ground, he said). Then after the war he had come back to Edinburgh to study for his PhD, and had been taken on as a research assistant.

He and Dr Scott were now looking into the possibilities open to them. They had had interesting offers from Chicago, where they could work together, but it would be a great change for both of them, and they were still thinking about it, and what it might lead to in the longer term.

They told the Andersons that May would be the best month, when they could be virtually certain of good weather, and the main holiday season had not yet begun. For anyone with a car, they said, the whole of Tuscany wasn't all that big, and you could base yourself at one place and get around easily enough. Florence itself was pretty central, but for somewhere to stay they would recommend its close neighbour, Fiesole, from where there was good public transport into Florence itself. There was an excellent *pensione* there that they knew – they had in fact spent their own honeymoon in it.

Mr Anderson excused himself for getting his notebook out, but said that his memory was not what it had once been. He spent the next hour jotting down the highlights of what they had to say about the other towns of the region, as well as various sites connected especially with the Medici family, and isolated forts, abbeys and convents. Much of this they might have found in the more detailed guidebooks, but as Mr Anderson said when he thanked them, it made a huge difference to hear it all with their personal comments. However, their visitors did say that, unless the Andersons had some particular interests, they would find all they needed to know about the famous Florentine art galleries in almost any of the easily available sources. They topped off the geographical, historical and cultural information with some advice on food and wine, and finally Dr Scott said she could lend them some local maps that they certainly couldn't obtain in Edinburgh.

After they had left, John's father congratulated him on having had this idea. He reckoned that all the information



he had collected was worth far more than the trouble taken to provide lunch. Just about all that was left was to work out the best routes across Europe. He would now be going to work on that.

Like all Anderson meals these days, this had been a family one, and had included not only John and Alison, but also Jim and Marjory, Ann and the (not, strictly speaking, family) Maggie. An idea came into Mr Anderson's head as he realized that Ann was paying close attention to everything that was said about Italy, but he thought he had better consult his wife before he said anything.

As soon as they were alone, he asked her: "What would you say to taking Ann and Maggie with us?" She asked him if they could they really afford it. "It wouldn't make much difference to transport costs", he said, "and these continental hotels are quite cheap for accommodation. We could go back to our old picnics for midday meals. And I think they have enough money of their own for any shopping they might want to do". "Well", she said, "we did economize last year, and we can do it again next year, so I suppose we can afford a little extravagance this time. I'd certainly like to have them, and they should get a lot out of it".

When they were asked, both girls said they would really like to come. Ann even said that she had wondered about asking, but had thought it would add too much to the cost, and she said, with a thoughtfulness unusual in one so young, that she had wondered if they might prefer to be on their own, just the two of them. Maggie thanked them, and said she would need to ask her parents, but it seemed very unlikely that they would raise any objections. It was she who asked

if they would be going to the Dumonts' on the way, but Mr Anderson said no. He didn't want Elizabeth to get the idea that he went there for a free stopover every time he went into France. If John ever wanted their hospitality in connection with his studies, that was another matter. The two girls had been there for the *vendange* last year, and could go again this year if they wanted to. In case the thought occurred to them, he didn't want to include Paris either. The mere thought of driving into it or through it was too much for him, and he would give it a wide berth, as he had the last time.

That evening he pored over his maps and ferry timetables and worked out the general outline of a route. He had a few days of holiday carried over from 1948, so he thought the bank would agree to his being away for the entire calendar month of May. To make sure of the main part of their accommodaton needs, he wrote off to the *pensione* in Fiesole and asked if they could have a booking, for a period that would allow for a fairly leisurely drive each way. That would mean one more day going south and two more returning northward, than they had taken last time. He had a reply in the affirmative, in correct English, by return of post, which he thought was a good sign. Nearer the time, he thought, he must reconfirm, and warn the management that they might arrive fairly late in the afternoon.

Around Easter he, and any of the young that he could persuade to join in, spent every weekend putting his Edinburgh garden in good order. He wondered if they still kept up the old tradition of Easter-time gardening in the two Kirkton families. Come to think of it, he and Mrs

Anderson were rather out of touch with the old place. They could easily make a day trip there some Sunday after they got back from Italy. "And show them the best of my photographs", he thought.

On May Day, he belatedly realized what he had let himself in for. *Three* women to get moving every morning! However, two of them had learned how to keep him happy, and the third had been well briefed, so in fact they left a mere five minutes after the appointed hour. He grumbled about it, on principle, in the belief that it would get worse if he let things slide.

He had in fact rather bullied them into taking what he now said was his preferred Channel crossing, the long one to St Malo, and his approximate routes across France would both begin and end there. Maggie had assured him she hadn't felt in the least sea-sick on the shorter crossings when they had gone for the *vendange*, and proved on this longer one that she qualified as an honorary Anderson in that respect at least. They took a route well to the south, and in fact, as there might still be snow on the Alpine passes, they had chosen to retrace their old route along the French and Italian Rivas. On the way north he wanted to try the Mont Genève pass to Briançon and Grenoble.

His aim would be to do a maximum of about 300 miles or 500 kilometres in a day, and a bit less in the mountains, so that they wouldn't get too tired of being in the car, and would often have time for a brief look around. He tried to include interesting places they had never been to before. For example he had always admired modern French pottery, so a stop in Limoges might be worthwhile – and indeed it

was, and gave the girls a new slant on design. They decided that the old traditional Limoges, beautiful in its way, was not for them, but like Mr Anderson they greatly admired the modern “usable” china.

It was of course almost unbearably tantalizing to have to drive straight through, or up above, the places he and his wife had liked so much on the Riviera, but she said she had calculated that they could spend the last night before Fiesole in Menton (or Mentone, according to which map you used) which they hadn’t explored the last time. It was one of their more expensive stops, but they thought they could see why Queen Victoria had liked it so much.

The weather, as predicted, was just right, and young and old greatly enjoyed their explorations, although in the privacy of their room at Fiesole the girls said that the best bits were when they could sit out on a terrace somewhere, leisurely taking in Italian food and drinks and doing some embroidery. The ice-cream in particular was everything it was supposed to be, and they were not the first to decide that pistachio was their favourite flavour. They began to take an interest in the wines that were available, and to be increasingly choosy. It was not easy to pick up the language, except for what was useful in restaurants and shops, but they noted that Mrs Anderson could speak it well, and they enlisted her to help them. At least they were both quite good at pronouncing it, and inclined to mock other foreigners’ efforts, especially the English and Americans. They would like to come back some day with David and Bill. Those two would have a lot to say about the Leaning Tower, Maggie predicted.

### **Pillow talk**

*I'm very glad we made our trip. It has gone a long way to filling a great gap in my education.*

*I learned a lot too. I suppose I've never really known what to make of art. But when you see the famous Botticellis you get more out of it than you ever can from illustrations in books. It's the same with the architecture. And the scenery – the view from Fiesole is unforgettable.*

*The girls obviously enjoyed themselves. You can see why they get along together so well – they both want to linger over the same things and feast their eyes on them. If you asked them to write down what they had learned I doubt if you would get much, but that doesn't mean they weren't taking it all in. Far more than me, I suppose. Ann said at one point that what most impressed her was simply colours – everything was so different in Italy.*

*I seem to have caught some of your self-education spirit. At least I'm going to have another go at the language. In the early stages it all seems so easy, but when you really get down to Italian verb forms you find it's all a bit more complicated than you thought it was. My first target will be to really understand opera libretti! We must get a few more records.*

*Languages are hard work for me. But I do admire Italian printing – I can get a lot of pleasure just looking at their books, even when I only half understand what I am reading.*

*And you may as well admit it – the girls have discovered your weak spot, you just love the food.*

*I do indeed. And I hope you've picked up some new ideas, as well as stocking up on herbs. I'll see what Italian wines I can find in Edinburgh.*

## Mile-posts

**A**T EASTER 1949 John and I went our separate ways. He spent a week with the Dumonts, travelling by train, while I took the car to Argyll. My mother was spending a great deal of time there, and my father said he didn't mind her being away so much for this crucial year, but from our opening celebrations onwards I would have to be there as much as possible myself, along with my salaried manager.

I had gone for a very brief visit in the early spring, to be there when the plants arrived from Aberdeen, and then left her to supervise their planting – not so much technically, as the men knew what to do, better than she did, but to see that the different species went where we had planned for them to go.

For the Easter visit we had all the ornamental plants from Edinburgh, and once again she took over most of the work, while I had to make a start on planning the furniture and equipment. It seemed to help, when I was beginning to think it all out, to have the buildings there in front of me, even in their unfinished state. I also had two babies, one cat and one kitten (the chosen, recorded one, with a namely father) to look after, in our very rustic facilities.

Although the hotel business has always been kept separate from the textile one, I have a personal stake in both of them, so I made large orders through my father for curtain material, which would eventually be handed over to a contractor to be made up and put in place, while Bill was retaining control over even small details like curtain rails – and very pernickety he was. I paid Ann a fee for advising on curtains, carpets and cushions, and Maggie the same amount for choosing the bedding and towels, knowing that in fact they would collaborate over the whole job.

I got back to Edinburgh with Mary and James and Ting and her kitten, the day before John came from France. He had a lot to tell me. I insisted on starting with the family news. Elizabeth was as beautiful as ever, and her two children were also very good looking. He would have liked to attribute this to “outbreeding” but had to admit that this didn’t explain Elizabeth herself, and then he tried to turn it on me, half highlander and half lowlander as I am. Philippe was also well, and leading a fully active life in spite of having one artificial foot. The whole place was looking very fresh and spring-like, weeks ahead of Edinburgh. They had had several traditional Easter things to eat, including some almond cakes, of which Elizabeth had sent me a sample.

He had been surprised by Elizabeth’s immersion in her library work, and the interest she was taking in her finds in the document collection. M. Dumont was very patient and helpful, she said, and was very good at decyphering the old handwriting. Her main difficulty had been to stop herself



being too distracted by the detailed contents of the letters, and getting on with her indexing. She had sorted the letters out in a system of files, retying old bundles and putting them in numbered boxes, and putting single ones into ordinary cardboard files in a cabinet.

The document part of her indexing related almost entirely to the names of the writers, and she had been building up a set of notes on who they all were. What John had found useful was a second listing, a simple cross-referencing by date, so that it was easy to pick out the period he was mainly looking for. Elizabeth pointed out that it was early days, and that it would take a long time to go through the whole collection in this way. The chests were in great disorder – you never knew what you would find in any of them, and you could only say they were very roughly sorted by dates.

In the meantime she had set aside one group of letters which had particularly interested her father-in-law (and Philippe, she added, somewhat unconvincingly). He thought it might clear up what had always been a mystery in the family. They had always thought it likely that some or all of those who had neither fled the country nor been martyred must have “abjured”, and that the present day Dumonts were descended from some who had done so and returned to the reformed faith when it became safe to do so. They had now been finding evidence to support this conjecture, and also other information about returned refugees. M. Dumont was curious to know to which group

his own ancestors belonged. He thought, from what his father had told him, that they had probably been among the abjurers.

John said that this was the kind of thing that PhD theses were made of. The collection of relevant papers was still rather thin, but Elizabeth said she could almost guarantee that there would be more to come. The religious question was the key part of the story, but the letters should throw light on the movements and other activities of this small but quite important group of seventeenth-century French people.

He said that what he had seen so far was enough for him to apply now to begin on his special studies. At the beginning of term he would consult the lecturer who he was hoping would be his supervisor. He would like always to keep in mind the larger picture as well, and would be reading everything he could find on seventeenth-century thought. Even now, he was beginning to get one central idea. It was that you could probably follow fairly clear chains of progress separately in each of several major groups of subjects – mathematics and science, religion and philosophy, politics and economics, literature and art – but that it was much harder to see the changing *Zeitgeist* as a whole. And yet the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries each seemed to have its own distinct character.

The Dumonts had assured him that he was welcome to come as often and for as long as he wanted to. He hadn't known quite how to put it to them, but he had felt compelled

to say that he thought he would be asking for frequent but short visits, for what must have seemed a strange reason – he couldn't bring his cats! He didn't know how often I would be coming with him – probably not at all until the hotel business was well started. He had told them how much the two girls had liked their grape picking, and he thought they would be back this autumn, although it might be their last time, as their lives were moving on, in Scotland.

Then, in early May, soon after the expedition to Tuscany had left, John arranged a visit to the Whites, complete with children, and also, of course, the cat and kitten – they shared the travelling basket. John said he really had to make a report to Dr White, as he had provided so much good advice, but both the two old people actually seemed much more interested in the children. It was the last time we saw the old scholar, as he died – peacefully in his sleep, they said – in October of that year. John went to the funeral in Coldstream, although he generally avoided such occasions. We did keep in touch with Mrs White in her remaining years, which she spent back in Surrey, with her son, daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren.

John's graduation had been in July. That wasn't much of a party, really. Only his father and I attended the ceremony, while his mother minded the babies, and put together a festive lunch on their lawn, attended by all of the family then in town, plus Maggie, but nobody else. We would have included Dr Scott and her Andrea, but by this time they had settled in America. And of course John had a photo-

graph taken by his father, in his cap and gown. He himself was not very stirred by the occasion. I think his own thoughts were all about what came next.

By this time my mother could report that our new house had water from its own well and water storage, and sewage to its own septic tank (a long way from the well), and was connected not only to the electricity but also, miraculously, to the telephone system. We had had a stroke of luck when the post office, which ran the telephones in those days, was doing some other work which could easily incorporate two lines to our place. In short, we could set up a sort of indoors camp, so long as we were prepared to move around and keep out of the way of the workmen who were applying the finishing touches. She herself, when she visited us, would go on using her corner of the temporary hut, until the time came to demolish it. She hoped my father would come too, at least once during the summer.

John brought so many books that we hardly had room for our usual pile of groceries and other items, but I said that, wherever he stowed it all, I needed the back seat for myself, children and cats. From this start he would go on to build up his main library.

And so we settled in for a very active three months. After this marathon preparatory stage of reading the main published works, John would get down to his PhD subject proper. His plan was to see what he could find, successively, in Edinburgh, Oxford and Paris. Not surprisingly, the first two produced very little directly related to the Dumont

family, although one member of it was well enough known to history – a distant aristocratic relation, who had spent some time in exile in England. Searches always turned up the name of yet another Dumont, better known in France than elsewhere, who had been a notable explorer of the Antarctic around the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but our M. Dumont said that his relationship with the explorer was even more distant.

After we went back to Edinburgh in early October I took to spending long weekends at the hotel, checking that everything was on schedule. We applied for a licence, which was readily granted, and began acquiring staff early in 1950. I entered into a long-term engagement with the PR firm, which said it could take care of the press – would we just say how many could be invited for a weekend stay. They strongly recommended inviting spouses, and said they would try to make sure that that was what they really were. Once you're up and running, they suggested, you needn't be *quite* so particular, but you don't want to attract the wrong sort of reputation, right from the start. Open it in style, they said. It will cost a tiny fraction of what has been invested already, and you'll get it all back, on the one condition that you keep your high-class reputation, and can charge accordingly.

It was a party to remember. Our stay-over guests arrived on the Friday, and some carefully selected local VIPs came on the Saturday morning. Our quite small house was filled to bursting point by our families, and we had a large tent

for the young. We had a little Champagne-fuelled ceremony before lunch, and then in the evening we had what most impressed the “foreigners”, a real Highland ceilidh. It was managed – and brought to life – by Ann and Maggie and their “boys”. Nobody wanted to stop at midnight, but we explained that our relations with the locals were very important to us – and we could have added that we didn’t want the journalists all coming down to breakfast with serious hangovers, and writing their pieces while still suffering.

They left at intervals on the Sunday, and to judge by the clippings sent to us by our PR people, we had done everything just right. The bookings were soon rolling in.

## It never stops

**W**ITH ALISON'S first hotel opening, and John's getting a toe-hold on the upper slopes of scholarship, we are coming to the end of the beginnings of their story. If we can ever continue to tell it, we will have to employ a much wider canvas, and a much broader brush.

The latter part of 1950 saw the first death among their parents. It was very sudden and unexpected. Mr Stewart felt seriously unwell, and asked his chief assistant to take him home, in mid-afternoon, and his wife – as a trained nurse – immediately called for an ambulance. Nothing could be done, however, and he died of “heart failure” before it could even get there.

Alison left the children with John and drove straight to Kirkton. Her mother seemed to be unnaturally calm, and she must have realized that this was how it would seem to Alison, for she remarked that she had seen many, and far worse deaths in her time. Life would never be the same again, but she had Alison, and John, and her little grandchildren. For her part, Alison had to admit to herself that she had never been as close to her father as she was to her mother, or as John was to both his parents. He had been almost entirely devoted to business, and had done great

things, but she would try not to follow him in such a restricted life. Nevertheless he had been a good kind father, always generous and helpful, and she would certainly miss him, and his good advice.

Mrs Stewart said that from now on the business would have to be left to her brother-in-law (who said he wanted to continue living in Galloway, and to interest himself mainly in the retail trade) and to the salaried professionals, responsible to the Director in Edinburgh. So there was no point in her continuing to live in Kirkton. She said she would like nothing better than to return to her native Argyll, so she was invited to live in the new house there. She sold the Kirkton one and nearly all its contents, except for the piano, which went to the hotel.

Whether her installation there had anything to do with it was never made clear, but the hotel manager handed in his notice to leave at the end of the year. The man himself denied any ill feeling, but that might have been because he was keen to stay on good terms with Alison, in case of future need. It did seem to be true that he simply hadn't liked living in the depths of the country. He had worked very well for them, so they gave him a generous final bonus, and promised to supply a good reference if asked for one.

Mrs Stewart had a long discussion with her daughter, the outcome of which was that *she* would be the new manager, with the same salary as the old one. They both suspected that the late Mr Stewart would not have approved, but really it seemed sensible enough. She had watched how things had developed all through the process of turning her parents' old house into a fine modern hotel, and had become



fascinated by it all, as well as proving herself an efficient supervisor of all the work on the grounds. At the end of a very successful 1951, when she had clearly proved her ability, John was to say that the proof of the pudding had been the preeing of it – as his father would put it. Alison agreed with his suggestion to include a substantial bonus in her mother's renewed contract, related to the hotel's profits. She made similar contracts with the managers of all her later hotels.

John spent the autumn term in Edinburgh, ransacking its considerable library resources, discussing his findings and his ideas with his supervisor, and setting some of them down in writing, for comment. He took the mid-term holiday off for a visit to Argyll, where he noted with some amusement that the last of the summer visitors had gone, and that the hotel had managed to attract about ten or a dozen honeymoon couples, who were being cosseted as never before, because Alison saw them as the essential propagators of the hotel's word-of-mouth publicity.

She had spent some time with him in Edinburgh, but made sure she was at the hotel for the switch in seasonal activities, and again to prepare for their first Christmas. The Andersons in Edinburgh said they would miss them, but were thankful that Ann, Maggie, David and Bill had not been lured away.

Marjory made the long awaited announcement that she was expecting a baby, and a girl one was safely delivered in the Simpson in February 1951. Jim agreed that she should be called Elizabeth. With their business well established, they thought they could now take on a mortgage, and they

found a flat as near as they could to the Anderson grandparents' house, ostensibly to be conveniently near the trial-run workshop, but in fact rather more to be near grandmotherly help with the new baby. Jim persuaded Marjory not just to take maternity leave, but to give up her driving instruction work altogether. It would really be best for young Lisbet and whatever siblings she ever had, and Marjory could occasionally help out, as she had done before, when they had some new product to promote – that was also one of her talents, he said persuasively. Her own mother seemed resigned to spending the rest of her life in Kirkton, even after her father retired. In fact she said she too liked the place, and they had made many friends. Alastair still regarded it as his base, but didn't spend much time there.

Mr Anderson had been downcast at the approaching prospect of living in an “empty” house, but then he had another of his great ideas, and called a conference. This time it was himself and Mrs Anderson, Ann and Maggie – who, he could see, would be the next and last to go – and David and Bill.

He began with what he hoped would count as a mere pleasantry, although you never knew how the young would react, these days. He addressed himself to David: “May I ask, David, when are you going to do the right thing by my daughter?”. Embarrassed silence from David, and an explosion from Ann. It was Maggie who poured oil on the troubled waters. “Actually”, she said, “all four of us have been discussing things a lot recently, and wondering what we can do. We just assumed that everybody understood that we are really engaged, for all but the formality. We've got a

big idea for work, but no capital and not enough income at present even to set up our own homes". She knew well enough that she was talking to a senior banker, and he obviously had something to say to them. And he hadn't been rude to her Bill.

Mainly so as to support Maggie, and keep things going, Mrs Anderson asked what kind of ideas they had in mind. The young peacemaker explained that they had been hearing of other groups of people more or less like themselves, who had been successful in setting up design consultancy businesses. Their clients were big manufacturing firms, or sometimes big architectural companies in search of new ideas for some unusual building, or civil engineers who wanted advice on the appearance of their constructions.

Mr Anderson, in an effort to mollify his irate daughter, said he thought the girls could produce plenty of evidence of their artistic talents. No doubt he had in mind their growing portfolios of his own colour photographs of all of their work. And Bill had shown what he could do on a difficult design job for the new hotel. Even David's work, although apparently a simple enough thing, had been much praised for showing how good design could overcome the difficulties of post-war austerity. From what he had heard from them, they were not getting much chance, in their present jobs, to show what they could do.

He had had the germ of an idea, and as far as it went, he had cleared it with Mrs Anderson. They had this big house, and now it contained only "us two old people" and the two girls. If they could speed thing up a bit, and get married, all four could move in and have free board and lodging for at

least a year. An extra room could be rigged up as a drawing office. He had worked it out that they could afford this as their contribution to setting this little group up in business. He had seen what they could do, and he was sure that if they could once get started there would be plenty of demand for their services. "It's how things are done these days", he said – "out-sourcing, they call it. If you can just find one good client, with a project that will make you known, that's all you need".

David said he was sure he could speak for them all in saying how grateful they were for this offer. They would have to make a lot of arrangements for the weddings, to start with – or perhaps even for the engagements which should come first – and for giving up their present jobs. They would ask around and see what some of their older friends thought their chances were. Their teachers at the Art College must know about such things. If they got any encouragement, he thought they should form some kind of legal entity – a company, or maybe a partnership – to show that their idea had some sort of solidity. Mr Anderson's help with matters like that would be very useful.

Mr Anderson thought he had better not take any more verbal risks, but his thoughts, which he kept to himself, were that this scheme was very much in line with the way things were going, and that with these four conspicuously talented and hard working young people it could hardly go wrong. And he had better make it up with Ann. Flowers were the traditional answer, and he was pretty sure they would work in this case. She often had a vase of them in her room – from David maybe?

Christmas 1951 had been a great success at the hotel, but fell rather flat at the Edinburgh house. They all realized that the animating spirit had been Alison, and in particular that it was she who had seen to the musical side of things. Mr Anderson had to admit that it had only been a moderate success – at least the food was as good as ever, he said – and he decided that they would have to do something different next year. The four young ones went off as usual to the north for New Year, the girls flaunting their engagement rings and the boys telling their families about the weddings planned for May, one in Edinburgh and one in Kirkton, a week apart. Priority in date had been decided by the toss of a coin. For their families, one visit south would cover both occasions.

The scheme did work, although it seemed to have a painfully slow start. Alison said she would also make a small contribution – she would pay for half a year's carefully defined work by the PR company that had been so effective in the hotel start up. It seemed obvious that this was what was needed to get people talking, and it was either that, or a bit of luck with their first commission, that broke the ice.

They soon developed a way of working that suited them. One of the four took responsibility for each project, but they all discussed it together and pooled their ideas. Usually the boys would produce finished drawings from the girls' sketches, and their close collaboration then often extended to one of the girls adding colour to a black and white drawing. They were nothing if not a team. By the end of the second year they reached the rather curious marker of being able to refuse offers of work that didn't much interest

them, and were able to move into an office in Queen Street. They could start thinking about flats to live in. With Mr Anderson's enthusiastic participation they set up their own photographic facilities.

From then on, the three new businesses continued to thrive, each in its different way. The dolls' house one was deliberately restricted to the top end of the market, which had at least the advantage that it did not shrink when dolls' houses began to lose something of their universal popularity. The design group expanded, recruiting some of the cream of new graduates from the Art College. It retained the Queen Street office as a front, while most of the work went on in bigger premises on the outskirts of the town.

It was Alison's hotel business that grew the most. She picked her locations with the greatest care, and always in places that had no good hotel already. There had to be some attraction, of course, in the scenery, or the weather, or in some local interest. One of her earliest ventures outside Scotland – it never became one of her own hotels – was the furthest flung. Her mother said it was a wild gamble to put anything into it at all, but Alison said that was just precisely where her strength lay. She had a secure income from the Stewart business, her husband would be in a good job soon, and she now had more than one successful hotel behind her, so even if she lost whatever little she put into each of her next moves it wouldn't really matter. But in fact it wasn't so much money that she invested in this case, as goodwill, useful advice, and cooperation.

It all began when a couple with a strange sounding name booked in at the Gowan Hotel. Alison was there in their

house at the time and her mother phoned for her to come over, as a couple of new guests were asking to speak to her. The husband explained that they were from Indonesia – from Bali, in fact. He was a business man, and had come on a combined business and holiday trip to Europe. Mainly to “England” he said, as his only European language was English.

His tourism had taken him to Edinburgh and his textile interests had taken him to Kirkton. He had asked after Mr Stewart, who had done some business with his father, before the war. He was told that Mr Stewart had died, and that his widow was managing a hotel, owned by their daughter, in Argyll. His informant had added that if he wanted to see something of the country, quite different from the Kirkton area, it was as good a place as any, and as he had a hired car he could get there by a very attractive route across country. He could show him on the map, and could easily make a booking for them by phone, which he did.

After a couple of days he and his wife both said they had never come across such a perfect little hotel. They were very lucky with the weather, but intrigued to be told about Alison’s “honeymooning” scheme for the off-season. They were surprised by the temperature of the sea, so far north, and impressed by the number of guests who were swimming in it, even while declining to join in. On their last evening they asked Alison if there was anywhere they could have a talk, and became the very first hotel guests ever invited along to the house, after dinner.

Alison said that she had always been interested in geography, so at least she had some idea of where Bali was.

She had a faint memory that her father had once imported *ikat* cloth from there and she even knew what it was, because her young sister-in-law had once been reading a book about southeast Asian textiles and she had been struck by this idea. It had even occurred to her that it must be one kind of hand-weaving that no machine could put out of business. Her guests were suitably impressed and said that Alison seemed to know more about both the geography and the weaving than many people in the textile trade. The cloth that she remembered must have been exported by their own firm.

They explained to her that Bali was still very much a traditional country, and had a largely self-contained economy – it had very rich soils, adequate water supplies and clever farmers. But the population was growing, people were becoming more demanding, and they needed to develop new sources of income. The obvious one was tourism. The island had always attracted visitors, and many people supplemented their income from the sale of wood carvings, silver work, textiles, and even paintings, an art they had learned from a few Europeans who had settled among them between the wars. There were many guest houses, but their standard left much to be desired. Lately, one or two modern hotels had appeared, and there was talk of a major development along one of the best beaches, at Nusa Dua.

They had already speculated by acquiring a plot of land fronted by a beautiful beach. They were sure that if they built a hotel on it they could soon fill it with guests from Australia, and could count on others coming from further away as the air services improved and the fares came down. Now one important side interest of their travels had been



to see how good hotels were run. They were inclined to think they need only have come to this one, as the Gowan so exactly fitted the case.

For a start, would it be possible for them to see the working parts of the hotel? Alison said the best time would be after breakfast the next day, if they were not in a hurry to leave, and they continued their conversation. They explained that what they would be aiming at would be a quite small, but high class, hotel – just like the Gowan. They knew a young man in Bali who had great ambitions as an architect, and who was full of ideas about how to provide modern facilities in buildings that were adapted to the climate.

They wanted to make things as international as possible, and that didn't just mean catering for the Australians, but also for Japanese, Chinese, and certainly not overlooking the growing number of local people, in Jakarta especially, who were quite likely to come, mostly ethnic Chinese but including more and more successful Javanese business men.

Their various special requirements seemed to concern bathroom fittings rather more than the cuisine! But they also appreciated that the Gowan's success did not lie only in material things – what had impressed them most of all, in fact, was that the staff were so attentive and helpful. Once the building stage was over they might be back for more advice on how this had been achieved.

Finally, they asked if Mrs Anderson could recommend anyone who could come and study things on the spot, and give useful ideas, particularly on kitchen equipment, but on anything else as well. It would make a very good holiday. They would pay only a fairly modest fee, but all expenses

would be met. Alison thought she might at least push her luck a little, and asked if a young married couple would be acceptable, who would have different things to contribute. This provoked a short conversation in Balinese, for which they politely apologized, and which resulted in an affirmative reply, so Alison said she thought that her sister-in-law and her husband were exactly right for the job, and explained the parts they had played here in Argyll. She could make arrangements for Ann and David to meet them in Edinburgh on their way south.

This was the beginning of the long association that has continued ever since. The Balinese family were never in need of extra capital, and the Mango hotel never became part of Alison's empire, but was listed, taking the word from the airlines, as "In alliance with". Many a new guest has gone to Bali after hearing about it in Argyll, and a somewhat smaller number have come in the other direction, and no year has gone by without at least one family visit.

A complicated system of discounts, commissions and fees for services rendered has grown up, to keep the accountants and the tax people happy. Alison said it was "near enough" right, as far as she was concerned, and that money had little enough to do with the real benefits of an occasional month in Bali. She was well aware that Bali was not typical of the "third world", but was a unique place that cast its own enchantment. Rather more unexpectedly, her own little corner of Argyll seemed to have much the same effect on some of the Balinese family. And nobody was better pleased than Alison when she acquired a Balinese daughter-in-law and eventually a grandson and granddaughter.

Her Jo meanwhile went from strength to strength. His PhD thesis was well received, based as it was on the trove of old letters and other papers that Elizabeth helped him to unearth, and much follow-up study in Geneva, Oxford, London, and Paris. He made it the basis of a published paper, and this brought him to the attention – facilitated by his old supporter, Dr Scott – of a well known specialist in Renaissance studies in Chicago, who sent a congratulatory letter, pointing out the value of such studies in helping us to understand how the sixteenth century had progressed into the seventeenth.

He suggested that Dr Anderson should spend some time in Chicago, and should try a foray into the American lecture business, in which he could make the right introductions to get him started. Dr Scott had told him that John had been an outstanding speaker from the age of ten! Like others who have tried it, John found it an exhausting process, but it gave him the satisfaction of adding materially to the family income, as well as making his name known, so that when the first edition of his *magnum opus* came out a few years later it shot straight into the best-seller lists, and has ever since been widely recommended as a useful discussion of just how the Renaissance and the Reformation were linked to the Enlightenment.

## The last word

I HAVE BEEN asked to provide an epilogue. What can I say? It is all just the imaginings of an old man who wanted, if you please, to “fend off senile dementia”. He has made a long story out of very little material. My original was an anonymous old shrew who lived in Ayrshire, we think, nearly three hundred years ago, and made up an unkind, and probably libellous ditty about her husband’s impotence, which was popular for a while in some of the low howffs of that country. Then our great poet collected it and set it to a tune that would have been much too good for it as it stood – but, as was his wont, he rewrote it, and in fact turned it into the exact opposite of what it had been, a touching, simple little lyric about a life-long love.

And then comes this old man, who amuses himself by writing about quite a different story again, and saying he doesn’t care if nobody ever reads it, much less likes it.

My Jo is gone now. I made sure he was buried in Kirkton, and not cremated in Edinburgh, where we spent our last years. It was a sentimental gesture, to leave the possibility open that we will end up “the gither, at the foot”.

Quite unlike his rustic predecessor, my John Anderson became a famous man, who will long be remembered for his contribution to seventeenth-century history. My favourite bedside book, however, is one that he regarded as little more than a throw away pot-boiler, his collection of essays about more recent times, under the general title of *Paradoxical Biographies*. If you have read it, you will know its repeated theme, showing that many famous men and women embodied extraordinary paradoxes, best exemplified I think by Winston Churchill, who will always shine as the champion of freedom, but who didn't want the Indians (or for that matter my friends the Indonesians) to have it. Interestingly, I think, he only put in one of Lytton Strachey's famous four, Florence Nightingale. I suspected that it was the Florence connection that subconsciously got his attention, but I know he had a huge admiration for what he thought of as the “real” Miss Nightingale, one of the greatest bureaucrats that ever was, he said. From him, that was a compliment.

And then there's me, myself. I now have a name, but I haven't any great work to leave behind, only our financial creation, now parcelled out among our children, and soon to be subdivided further, among our grandchildren. And yet I still insist, when I tell them my stories, that my Jo needed

me as his other half, and that I too had an essential part to play.

When he died, the BBC allowed a decent interval to pass, and then asked me for an interview. I thought afterwards that I should have done my homework on the young lady who interviewed me, just as, of course, she had done hers on me. Her opening question, I know now, reflected something of her own life: "Which has been more important", she asked, "being Mrs Anderson, the wife of the well known historian, or Ms Stewart, creator of the well known hotel chain?" I had anticipated something like this, and had my answer ready: "I suppose I must be very greedy", I said, "but it was never a choice – I always wanted both". But then, as I said it, something clicked in my old brain, and I added: "But there is a third thing, which has been more important than either of these – our children and grandchildren. Without them, it would all have been for nothing, but with them it has been, I think, a great success, and it's still rolling". A few weeks later, I received a wedding invitation, with a little note tucked inside it that said: "He's just been promoted as First Secretary to the Embassy, and we'll soon be off to ... , but I'm going to continue with my journalism – between pregnancies, I hope".